COMMENTARY ON THE

CREED OF AṬ-ṬAḤĀWĪ BY IBN ABĪ AL -'IZZ

SHARH AL -'AQIDAH AT - ṬAḤĀWIYYAH

TRANSLATED BY
MUHAMMAD 'ABDUL-HAQQ ANSARI



KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA
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IN THE NAME OF ALLAH
THE COMPASSIONATE THE MERCIFUL

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INTRODUCTION

All praise and thanks belong to Allah, and may peace be upon His chosen servants.

The religion of Islam is characterized by and distinguished from all other religions by its many ordinances, rules and systems of life. The concept that comes in the forefront of these ordinances and systems is the Islamic creed (*'aqīdah*). This is from the viewpoint that belief is the fundamental principle for action and from it emanates the philosophy of life and the view of the creation and the Creator.

The Salaf (Pious Predecessors) of the nation of Muḥammad (may peace and blessings be upon him) have placed considerable emphasis on this concept on practical and theoretical grounds. Practically, the pure Islamic *'aqīdah* (creed), the one that is free from all superstition and innovation, far from false interpretation and denial, was their methodology of life and their guide to contemplation and thought. Theoretically, this Islamic *'aqīdah* received immense care and attention in its presentation and explanation, as well as in defense of its sacred domain, regardless of whether they did so by way of education, authorship, dialogue, or debate.

Among the valuable books on this subject is *The Creed of Aṭ-Ṭaḥāwī* of Imām Abū Ja'far Aḥmad Ibn Muḥammad Al-Azdī Aṭ-Ṭaḥāwī (d. 321 A.H.). It is a very accurate and precise text for its small size. It includes the fundamental principles of belief and its most important issues. One scholar was destined for its explanation and presentation. He was 'Alī Ibn 'Alī Ibn Abī Al-'Izz Al-Dimashqī (d. 792 A.H.). His explanation is adequate and in an easy to understand language.

This book has obtained high stature at this University since the time it was founded. It has been the main reference book for the *'aqīdah* curriculum of university-level studies. In fact, even before that it had received special attention from the scholars and leaders of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. That is because it encompasses the true creed of the Ahl as-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah and is the methodology upon which this country (may Allah fortify and honor it) has stood since its founding.

Therefore, due to the importance of this book and the immense need for it and its like, the University took on the task of translating it into English in hopes that those who speak English

may benefit from it. The task of this translation was entrusted to a qualified professor who is fluent in both Arabic and English, Dr. Muḥammad 'Abdul-Ḥaqq Anṣārī, researcher in the Deanery of Academic Research. Dr. Muḥammad took on this task and put forth an effort to be thanked, and one deserving of our prayers and praise.

Then the University entrusted the printing and publication of this book, including review and editing by various specialists, to the Institute of Islamic and Arabic Sciences in America, a branch of the University. The director and those with him at the Institute have put forth constant efforts to publish this book and we thank them for that.

I ask Allah to make this work a benefit and source of good for the nation of Muḥammad (may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). Allah is the Giver of success.

Dr. Muhammad Ibn Sa'ad Al-Salem, Rector,
Al-Imām Muḥammad Ibn Sa'ūd Islamic University

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

This work is important for two reasons. One, the *Creed* which is commented upon here is most probably the first authentic statement of faith that we possess of the Ahl as-Sunnah as understood and practiced by Imām Abū Ḥanīfah (d. 150/767) and his disciples. It was written by a great and distinguished scholar of *fiqh*, as well as no less a distinguished scholar of ḥadīth, Imām Abū Ja'far Aṭ-Ṭaḥāwī (d. 321/933) who was ranked as a *mujtahid* in Ḥanafī *fiqh* and held to be the leader of the Ḥanafī jurists in Egypt. Abū Ḥanīfah has long been credited with writing a creed, *Al-Fiqh al-Akbar*, and dictating a testament, *Al-Waṣīyyah*, on the subject of belief. But it is now generally accepted that he was not the author of those two works; rather, those works were composed in later days by unknown authors belonging to his school.[1] Another work of creed is attributed to Abū Ḥanīfah's student, Imām Muḥammad Ash-Shaybānī (d. 189/804), but its authenticity is even more doubtful.[2]

The only other credal statement which may be compared with this *Creed* is the *Ibānah* by Aṭ-Ṭaḥāwī's illustrious contemporary Abū Al-Ḥassan 'Alī Al-Ash'arī (d. 324/935). Whether this work was written by Al-Ash'arī in the early years of his career when he broke with the Mu'tazilah or at the end of his career, and whether some parts were written by him at all has been controversial.[3] Whatever may be the case, it cannot be said that it was written earlier than the *Creed* of Aṭ-Ṭaḥāwī. There is much that is common between the two creeds, but they do differ on certain issues. A close look will also reveal that Aṭ-Ṭaḥāwī's *Creed* is more comprehensive and elaborate than the *Creed* of Al-Ash'arī. Abū Manṣūr Al-Māturīdī (d. 333/944), another contemporary of Aṭ-Ṭaḥāwī (although a younger one), who developed Ḥanafī *kalām* in Central Asia, is also listed as

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[1] For a discussion of these writings, see A. J. Wensinck, *Muslim Creed* (London: Frank Cass & Co., 1965), pp. 102-124; Muḥammad Abū Zahrah, *Abū Ḥanīfah: Ḥayatuhu wa Asruhu wa Arā'uhu wa Fiqhuhu* (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-'Arabī, 1947), pp. 168-183.

[2] See Fūwād Sezgin, *Tārīkh at-Turāth al-'Arabī* (Arabic translation of *Geschichte Des Arabisches Schrifttums*) (Lieden: Brill, 1967 and Imām Muḥammad Ibn Sa'ūd Islamic Univ., 1403/1983), vol. I, part III, p. 73.

[3] See Richard J. McCarthy, S.J., *The Theology of Al-Ash'arī* (Beirut: 1953), pp. 231-2; 'Abdur-Raḥmān Badawī, *Madhāhib al-Islāmiyyīn* (Beirut: Dār al-Malayin, 1971), pp. 515-518.

having written a *Creed* (*'aqīdah*) which is still unpublished. It appears, however, that his *Creed* did not become popular; only one scholar, Tāj ad-Dīn As-Subkī (d. 771/1370) is recorded as having commented upon it.[4] Aṭ-Ṭaḥāwī's *Creed*, on the other hand, enjoyed great popularity. Some fifteen scholars from different periods of time and different parts of the Islamic world, as we shall see, have written small or large commentaries on it.

The second important feature of this work is the approach of the commentator. Although he was brought up and educated in a Ḥanafī family, worked as a Ḥanafī judge (*qāḍī*), and was fully aware of later developments in Ḥanafī *kalām*, Ibn Abī Al-'Izz abhorred the *kalāmī* method which almost all the other commentators on the *Creed* followed. Instead, Ibn Abī Al-'Izz pursued the Salafī method, particularly as it was developed by Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymīyyah (d. 728/326) and his disciple, Ibn Al-Qayyīm (d. 751/1350). At places in his commentary, Ibn Abī Al-'Izz dissociates himself from Abū Manṣūr Al-Māturīdī (d. 333/944), as well as from later Ḥanafī theologians, and adopts the views of the *ḥadīth* scholars and he defends them as well. On many occasions he quotes from *Al-Fiqh al-Akbar* to show that he has Abū Ḥanīfah, if not later Ḥanafīs, on his side. At times, where Abū Ḥanīfah's views differ from the views of the ḥadīth scholars, such as, for example, on the question of *īmān*, he states both views and painstakingly shows that the difference between them is not substantial. The commentary may therefore be taken as both a Ḥanafī and a Salafī exposition of the Islamic faith; Ḥanafī in the sense of early Ḥanafīsm, and Salafī in the sense that it was developed by Ibn Taymīyyah and his school.

In the following pages I will discuss the life and work of the author and those of the commentator. I shall make a few observations on the text and elucidate some features of the method that the commentator follows. I will also underline some ideas of the commentary. Finally, I will conclude this section with a few words regarding the translation and the notes that I have added throughout the work.

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[4] See Fūwād Sezgin, *Tārīkh at-Turāth al-'Arabī*, vol. I, part IV, p. 42.

Aṭ-Ṭaḥāwī's Life and Work

Abū Ja'far Aḥmad Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Salāmah Ibn 'Abdul-Mālik Aṭ-Ṭaḥāwī[5] was born on Rabī' al-Awwal 11, 239 A.H./ August 9, 853 C.E., in Ṭaḥa, a town in Upper Egypt, to an Arab family from the Hajr branch of the Qaḥṭānī tribe of Azd. His father was a *ḥadīth* and literature scholar. His mother, too, was learned. Both his parents used to attend the lectures of Imām Ash-Shāfi'ī (d. 204/820). Abū Ja'far first learned from the members of his family and then he attended the classes of Abū Zakarīyyā Ibn Muḥammad on the Qur'ān in the mosque of 'Amr Ibn Al-'Āṣ. At that time, he memorized the entire Qur'ān.

Abū Ja'far received his first lessons in *ḥadīth* from his father. After that, he pursued the study of *ḥadīth* from his maternal uncle, Ismā'īl Ibn Yaḥyā Al-Muzanī (d. 264/877), an eminent disciple of Imām Ash-Shāfi'ī. By the time he was thirteen he had finished Ash-Shāfi'ī's *Musnad*. This was, however, only a beginning. Abū Ja'far continued his study of *ḥadīth*. He made it a point to meet every scholar that went to Egypt from any part of the Islamic world and he learned the *ḥadīth* that they taught. This is testified to by the list of

[5] For Aṭ-Ṭahāwī's life and works, see Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-A'yān*, ed. by Dr. Iḥsān 'Abbās (Beirut: Dār Ṣadir, 1398/1978), vol. I, pp. 71-72; Aṣ-Ṣafadī, *Al-Wafī bi al-Wafayāt* (Wiesbaden, 1971), vol. 8, p. 9; Adh-Dhahabī, *Siyar A'lām an-Nubalā'*, ed. by Shu'ayb Al-Arnawūṭ and Ḥussayn Al-Asad (Beirut: Mu'assasat ar-Risālah, 1401/1981), vol. 15, pp. 27-33; Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān al-Mizān*, (Hyderabad, 1329 A.H.), vol. I, pp. 274-282; Al-Qarshī, *Al-Jawāhir al-Muḍi'ah*, ed. by 'Abdul-Fattāḥ Al-Ḥilwa (Cairo: 'Īsā Al-Ḥalabī, 1398,1978), vol. I, pp. 271-277; Abū Isḥāq Ash-Shīrāzī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Fuqahā'*, ed. by Ihsān 'Abbās (Beirut, 1978), p. 142; Ibn An-Nadīm, *Al-Fihrist* (Cairo: Al-Maktabah at-Tajārīyyah, 1348 A.H.), p. 292; Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāyah wa an-Nihāyah* (Cairo: Maṭba'at as-Sa'ādah), vol. 11, p. 174; Ibn Al-'Imad, *Shadharat ad-Dhahāb* (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Qudsī, 1350 A.H.), vol. Iī, p. 288; Al-Yafi'ī, *Mir'at al-Jinan* (Hyderabad, 1337), vol. I, p. 281; Hajī Khalīfah, *Kashf aẓ-Ẓunūn* (Istanbul, 1362/1943), vol. II, p. 143; Ibn Al-Jawzī, *Muntazam* (Hyderabad, 1357 A.H.), vol. 6, p. 250; As-Sam'anī, *Al-Anṣab*, ed. by M. Al-'Awwamah (Beirut: n.d.), vol. 8, p. 218; Ibn Al-Athīr, *Al-Lubab* (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Qudsī, 1367-59 A.H.), vol. II, p. 276; Ad-Dāwūdī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Mufassirīn* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyyah, 1403/1983), vol. I, p. 74; As-Suyūṭī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Huffaẓ*, ed. by 'Alī M. 'Umar (Cairo: Maktabah Wahbah, 1393/1973), p. 337; Ismā'īl Basha, *Hadyat al-'Arifin* (Istanbul, 1951); Tash Kubrī Zadah, *Ṭabaqāt al-Fuqahā'* (Al-Musal: Mataba'at az-Zahrah, 1961), 2nd edition, p. 58); Sh. M. Zāhid Al-Kawtharī, *Al-Ḥawī fī Sīrat al-Imām Abī Ja'far Aṭ-Ṭaḥāwī* (Cairo: Al-Anwar Press, 1368 A.H.).

the teachers of *ḥadīth* that he mentions in his works. They come from Syria, Basrah, Kufah, the Hijaz, Yemen, Khurasan in the East and Morocco in the West. The list includes such renowned scholars as Al-Ḥāfiẓ Abū 'Abdur-Raḥmān Aḥmad Ibn Shū'ayb An-Nasā'ī (d. 303/915), Abū Zur'ah 'Abdur-Raḥmān Ibn 'Amr Ad-Dimashqī (d. 281/894), 'Alī Ibn 'Abdul-'Azīz Al-Baghawī (d. 280/893), and Abū Bishr Muḥammad Ibn Sa'īd Ad-Dūlabī (d. 310/922). Among his students who narrated *aḥādīth* from him, on the other hand, are such outstanding scholars of *ḥadīth* as Al-Ḥāfiẓ Abū Al-Qāsim Sulaymān Ibn Aḥmad Aṭ-Ṭabarānī (d. 360/971) and the great critic of *ḥadīth*, Abū Aḥmad 'Abdullah Ibn 'Adīy (d. 365/975).

Abū Ja'far was brought up in a Shāfi'ī family. His first teacher of *fiqh* was no less than Imām Ash-Shāfi'ī's great disciple Al-Muzanī, about whose juristic ability the imām had a very high opinion and whom he called the defender of his school.[6] Abū Ja'far studied Al-Muzanī's famous *Mukhtaṣar*, the first compendium of Shāfi'ī *fiqh*, with Al-Muzanī himself. He did not, however, limit himself to just that school; he also attended lectures on Ḥanafī *fiqh*, which were held at the Mosque of 'Amr Ibn Al-'Āṣ and he studied Ḥanafī works, a number of which his uncle had in his library and to which he often referred.[7]

Abū Ja'far's interest in Ḥanafī *fiqh* kept growing. The process was accelerated when he came into contact with two Ḥanafī judges of Egypt, Bakkar Ibn Qutaybah (d. 270/833) and Aḥmad Ibn Abī 'Imrān Al-Baghdādī (d. 280/893).[8] With these two, he increased his study of Ḥanafī *fiqh*. He once said, "At first I used to write *ḥadīth* from Al-Muzanī and follow the views of Ash-Shāfi'ī. But after some time, when Aḥmad Ibn Abī 'Imrān came and took over as judge of Egypt, I kept company with him and followed his opinions."[9]

Most probably it was at that time that his uncle called him aside and rebuked him for not having produced anything worthwhile up to that time. Abū Ja'far got angry at this and broke off from him. Later, when he wrote his *Mukhtaṣar* in Ḥanafī *fiqh* on the lines of

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[6] Az-Zarkalī, *Al-A'lām* (Beirut: Dār al-Malāyīn, 1980), vol. I, p. 329.

[7] Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-A'yān*, vol. 1, p. 72; Al-Yafi'ī, *Mir'at al-Jinān*, op cit., vol. I, p. 281.

[8] Adh-Dhahabī, *Siyar A'lām an-Nubalā'*, vol. 15, p. 27; Al-Qarshī, *Al-Jawāhir al-Muḍi'ah*, vol. I, p. 272.

[9] Adh-Dhahabī, *Siyar A'lām an-Nubalā'*, vol. 15, p. 30.

Al-Muzani's *Mukhtasar* in Shāfi'ī *fiqh*, he said that had his uncle been alive he would have regretted his earlier remarks.[10]

It is not unlikely that, due to his contacts with the judges of Egypt, Abū Ja'far had access to court papers. In 268/881 it happened that he objected to a court order and sent his observations on it to the governor, Ibn Ṭūlūn, who sent him to Syria to inquire into the matter. In Syria, he came into contact with the famous Ḥanafī judge, Abū Ḥāzim 'Abdul-Ḥamīd (d. 292/904), a disciple of a disciple of Abū Ḥanīfah's great student, Muḥammad Ibn Al-Ḥassan Ash-Shaybānī (d. 189/804). He went even deeper into Ḥanafī *fiqh* with this judge. During the year and a half that he spent in Syria, he visited Gaza, Ashkelon, Tiberias and Jerusalem.

When Abū Ja'far returned to Egypt, Judge Muḥammad Ibn 'Abdah appointed him his secretary. Many times, when the judge was absent, Abū Ja'far worked as his deputy. In 292/904, he was given the coveted post of "witness before the judge".[11] He held that post until his death in 321/933. He was put to rest in the graveyard of Banū Ash'ath Al-Qurayfah.

Aṭ-Ṭaḥāwī was first and foremost a jurist, but he also an equally eminent scholar of *ḥadīth*. A number of writers have spoken of his erudition and scholarship. Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1371) wrote, "He was a most reliable and correct narrator of *ḥadīth* and one of the great scholars of *ḥadīth* (*al-huffāẓ al-jahābidhah*)."[12] Ibn Ḥajar (d. 852/1440) quoted the remark of the famous Spanish scholar, Maslāmah Ibn Qāsim, "He was a reliable narrator, a great scholar, a famous jurist, very knowledgeable concerning the controversies of the jurists, and a man of keen insight."[13] Adh-Dhahabī (d. 748/1348) wrote, "He was the *muḥaddith* and *faqīh* of Egypt, equally distinguished in *ḥadīth* and in *fiqh*.. Whoever reads the works of this *imām* is sure to acknowledge his erudition and width of vision."[14] Abū Isḥāq Ash-Shīrāzī (d. 476/1083) remarked, "The leadership of Ḥanafī *fiqh* in Egypt undoubtedly goes to him."[15]

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[10] Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāyah wa an-Nihāyah*, vol. Iī, p. 174; al-Yafi'ī, *Mir'at al-Jinan*, vol. I, p. 281.

[11] Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-A'yān*, vol. I, p. 72.

[12] Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāyah wa an-Nihāyah*, op cit., vol. II, p. 174.

[13] Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān al-Mizān*, (Hyderabad, 1329 A.H.; reprint Beirut, 1390/1971), vol. I, p. 276.

[14] Adh-Dhahabī, *Siyar A'lām an-Nubalā'*, vol. 15, pp. 29-30.

[15] Abū Isḥāq Ash-Shirāzī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Fuqahā'*, p. 142.

Regarding his position in the Ḥanafī school, Ṭash Kubrī Zādah (d. 968/1561) observed, "He was an *imām* and *mujtahid* in the category of the *mujtahidūn fī al-masā'il*."[16] And As-Sam'ānī (d. 562/1167) noted, "Without a doubt, he was an *imām* [in *fiqh*], reliable and trustworthy [in *ḥadīth*] and no one came after him who could rise to his level in *fiqh* and scholarship."[17]

Aṭ-Ṭaḥāwī's first work on *ḥadīth*, *Sharḥ Ma'ānī al-Athar*, is a unique work. It discusses different views on one subject, points out their merits and flaws, and defends the view which he prefers. It is extremely helpful for getting insight into *fiqh*. Three scholars, the great commentator of Al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Al-Badar Al-'Aynī (d. 855/1451), the famous Mālikī scholar, Ibn 'Abdul-Barr (d. 463/1071) and the renowned Ḥanafī scholar, Jamāl ad-Dīn Az-Zaylā'ī (d. 762/1361), have commented on the work. In his second work, Sharḥ Mushkil al-Athar, Aṭ-Ṭaḥāwī highlights those facets of *ḥadīth* which are not normally noticed by common people. The famous Mālikī jurist and philosopher, Ibn Rushd (d. 598/1198) abridged the work. Two other scholars, Abū Al-Walīd Sulaymān Ibn Khalaf Al-Bājī (d. 474/1031) and *Qāḍī al-Quḍāt* Jamāl ad-Dīn Mūsā Al-Mālikī[18] (d. 803/1460), produced abridged editions. In his *Sunan* Ash-Shāfi'ī, Aṭ-Ṭaḥāwī collected the *aḥādīth* which he heard from his uncle, Al-Muzanī. This work was published in Cairo (1315/1877) as well as in Beirut (1406/1985). *At-Taswīyyah bayn Haddathanā wa Akhbaranā* is another work listed in his writings on *ḥadīth*.

Most of Aṭ-Ṭaḥāwī's writings were in the field of *fiqh*. We have already referred to his *Mukhtasar*. It is the first compendium of *fiqh* written according to the Ḥanafī school. It was edited by Abū Al-Wafā Al-Afghānī and published by Dar al-Kutub al-'Arabīyyah in Cairo (1370/1950). Another work, *Ash-Shurūṭ as-Saghīr*, which deals with the rules of trade, wages, pre-emption, endowments and charity, has been published in Baghdad (1394/1974) in two volumes. A part of a larger work of his, *Ash-Shurūṭ al-Kabīr*, has been published by Joseph Schacht in Heidelberg (1346/1927) under the title *Kitāb Adhkār al-Ḥuqūq wa al-Ruhūn*. A facsimile edition of a much more important work, *Ikhtilāf al-Fūqahā'*, was first produced by Fredrick Cohn (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyyah,

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[16] Tash Kubrī Zādah, *Ṭabaqāt al-Fuqahā'*, p. 58.

[17] As-Sam'ānī, *Al-Ansāb*, vol. 8, p. 218.

[18] See Muḥammad Saghīr Ḥassan Ma'sumī, op cit., p. 39.

1320/1902), and later by Dr. Ṣaghīr Ḥassan Masūmī, published it in Islamabad (Institute of Islamic Studies, 1391/1971) with a detailed introduction. The authors of *Al-Fihrist* and *Al-Juwāhir al-Muḍi'ah* have mentioned many other writings of Aṭ-Ṭaḥāwī in *fiqh*. The reader may refer to these two works.[19]

Al-'Aqīdah Aṭ-Ṭaḥāwīyyah

This work has been referred to by the following names in different manuscripts: (1) *Risālah fī Uṣūl ad-Dīn*, (2) *'Aqīdah Ahl as-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah*, (3) *Bayn as-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah*, and (4) *Bayn as-Sunnah wa Rijāb*.[20] (This last title seems to be a misspelling). It was first published with the third title in Aleppo in 1344/1925. The same title was put on the commentary on the creed by 'Abdul-Ghanī Al-Maydanī that was published by Muḥammad Muṭi' Al-Hāfiẓ and Muḥammad Riyaḍ Al-Maliḥ from Maktabat An-Nūrī, Damascus (1390/1970). Under the second title it was published in Riyadh (without mention of its date) with notes by Muḥammad Ibn Mani' and by Al-Maktab al-Islāmī in Beirut (1397 A.H.).

Commentaries on the *'Aqīdah*

A number of commentators, beginning in the 7th Century Hijrī and continuing until the last century, have written on the *'Aqīdah*. The following is a list of the commentators that were mentioned by Dr. Fūwād Sezgin in his *Tārīkh at Turāth al-'Arabī:*

1) Ismā'īl Ibn Ibrāhīm Ibn Aḥmad Ash-Shaybānī[21] (504/1110-629/1231), a Ḥanafī jurist commonly known as Ibn Muṣalī. He was born in Baṣrah and at times acted as the deputy to the judge in Damascus.

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[19] Ibn An-Nadīm, *Al-Fihrist*, p. 292; Al-Qarshī, *Al-Jawāhir al-Muḍi'ah*, vol. I, pp. 275-77.

[20] See Brockelman, *Geschichte der Arabisches Litteratur* (Leiden, 1937-49), vol. I, pp. 293-94.

[21] For more about Ismā'īl Ash-Shaybānī, see Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāyah wa an-Nihāyah*, vol. 13, p. 136; Al-Qarshī, *Al-Jawāhir al-Muḍi'ah*, vol. I, p. 144; Ibn Al-'Imād, *Shadharāt ad-Dhahab*, vol. 5, pp. 129f; Abū Al-Fatḥ Al-Yaninī, *Mir'at az-Zaman* (Hyderabad, 1380/1960), vol. 8, p. 674.

2) Najm ad-Dīn Manjubars[22] (d. 652/1254), a Turkish jurist. His commentary bears the title *An-Nūr al-Lami' wa al-Burhān as-Sāṭi'*. A copy of it, penned in 714 A.H., consists of 75 folios.

3) Hibatullah Ibn Aḥmad Ibn Mu'allā[23] (d. 732/1331), a Ḥanafī jurist and *uṣūlī* from At-Tiraz in Turkistan. His commentary is in 149 folios and is detailed.

4) Maḥmūd Ibn Aḥmad Ibn Mas'ūd Al-Qunāwī[24] (d. 771/1369), a jurist and *mutakallim* from Damascus, commonly known as Ibn As-Sarrāj. His commentary is entitled *Al-Qalā'id fī Sharḥ al-'Aqā'id*. It was published in 1311 A.H. in Qazan.

5) Sirāj ad-Dīn 'Umar Ibn Isḥāq Al-Marghinānī[25] (d. 773/1372), a renowned Ḥanafī scholar and a prolific writer. He added a detailed introduction and an epilogue to his commentary.

6) Muḥammad Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Maḥmūd Akmal ad-Dīn Al-Babartī[26] (d. 786/1384), a staunch defender of Ḥanafī views, and a contemporary to our commentator Ibn Abī Al-'Izz. The latter criticized some of his views in his book *Al-ttibā'*.

7) Ṣadr ad-Dīn Ibn Abī Al-'Izz (d. 792/1390), our commentator, whose works have been translated here. We will discuss him in more detail later.

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[22] For more about Najm ad-Dīn Manjubars, see Ismā'īl Basha, *Hadayat al-Arifīn*, vol. 1, p. 233.

[23] For more about Hibatullah, see Al-Qarshī, *Al-Jawāhir al-Muḍi'ah*, vol. II, pp. 204f.

[24] For more on Maḥmūd Al-Qunāwī, see Al-Qarshī, *Al-Jawāhir al-Muḍi'ah*, vol. II, pp. 156f; Ibn Ḥajar, *Ad-Durar al-Kaminah* (Hyderabad, 1360/1931), vol. IV, pp. 322f; Ibn *Ṭūlūn*, *Qudat Dimishq*, ed. by Ṣalāh ad-Dīn Al-Munajjid (Damascus, 1956), p. 200.

[25] For more on Sirāj ad-Dīn 'Umar Al-Marghinānī, see Ibn Ḥajar, *Ad-Durar al-Kāminah*, vol. III, pp. 154ff; Ibn Taghrī Bardī, *An-Nujūm az-Zahirah* (Cairo, 1383/1969), vol. II, pp. 120f; Ibn Al-'Imad, *Shadharāt ad-Dhahab*, vol. 6, pp. 228f; As-Suyūṭi, *Ḥusn al-Muḥāḍarah*, ed. by M. Abū Al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (Cairo: Al-Ḥalabī, 1387/1967), vol. I, p. 268; Muḥammad Ibn 'Alī Ash-Shawkānī, Al-Badr at-Tali' (Cairo: Maṭba*'at as-Sa'ādah*, 1348/1929), vol. 1, p. 505.

[26] For more on Muḥammad Al-Babartī, see Ibn Ḥajar, *Anbā al-Ghumar bi Abna' al-'Umar* (Hyderabad, 1388/1968), vol. III, pp. 179ff; Ibn Ḥajar, *Ad-Durar al-Kāminah*, vol. IV, pp. 250f; Ibn Al-'Imad, *Shadharat ad-Dhahab*, vol. VI, pp, 293f; Jalāl ad-Dīn As-Suyūṭi, *Bughyat al-Wu'at*, ed. by Abū Al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (Cairo: Al-Ḥalabī, 1384/1964), vol. I, p. 239.

8) Kafī Ḥassan Afandī Al-Iqhisārī[27] (d. 1025/1616). He completed his commentary in 1014 A.H. and gave it the name *Nūr al-Yaqīn fī Uṣūl ad-Dīn.*

9, 10, 11, 12) Four more commentaries have been noted by Dr. Sezgin but it is not known who wrote them.

Three more writers, not mentioned by Dr. Sezgin, also commented on the *'Aqīdah*:

13) Muḥammad Ibn Abī Bakr Al-Ghazzī,[28] commonly known as Ibn Bint Al-Ḥimyarī, a disciple of Ḥāfiẓ As-Sakhāwī (d. 902/1497), wrote a short commentary in 881 A.H. A copy of this work is preserved in Al-Ajirīyyah Library in Damascus.

14) Abū 'Abdullah Maḥmūd Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Abī Isḥāq[29] (d. 916/1510), a Ḥanafī jurist from Constantinople. According to the author of *Kashf aẓ-Ẓunūn*, he completed his commentary in 916 A.H.

15) And, finally, 'Abdul-Ghanī Ibn Ṭālib Ibn Ḥammādah Al-Ghanimī Al-Maydanī[30] (d. 1298/1881), a Ḥanafī scholar and writer, he composed a commentary which has been edited by Muḥammad Muṭi' Al-Hāfiẓ and Muḥammad Riyad Al-Maliḥ and published by Maktabah an-Nūrī (Damascus) in 1390/1970. The editors based their editions on three manuscripts, one written in 1295 A.H., another in 1258 A.H., two years after the composition of the work, and a third written in 1340 A.H. The editors have also compared the text of the *'Aqīdah* with a manuscript penned in 732/1331.

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[27] For more on Kafī Ḥassan Al-Iqhisārī, see Ḥajī Khalīfah, *Kashf aẓ-Ẓunūn*, pp. 113f, 1002, 1143 and 1802; Ismā'īl Bāsha, *Hadyat al-'Ārifīn*, vol. 1, pp. 291f; 'Umar Al-Kaḥalah, *Mu'jam al-Mu'allifīn* (Beirut: Dār Iḥya at-Turāth al-'Arabī, n.d.), vol. 3, p. 233; Az-Zarkalī, *Al-'Alām*, vol. II, p. 194.

[28] See 'Abdullah At-Turkī and Shu'ayb Al-Arnawūṭ, eds., *Sharḥ al-'Aqīdah Aṭ-Ṭaḥāwīyyah* (Beirut: Mu'assasat ar-Risālah, 1408/1987), vol. 1, p. 50.

[29] Hajī Khalīfah, *Kashf aẓ-Ẓunūn*, p. 1143.

[30] For more on 'Abdul-Ghanī Al-Maydānī, see 'Abdul-Razzāq Al-Bayṭār, *Ḥilyat al-Bashar fī Tārīkh al-Qarn ath-Thālith* 'Ashar, ed. by M. Bahjat Al-Bayṭār (Damascus: Al-Majma' al-Islāmī al-'Arabī, 1382/1963), vol. II, p. 867; Muḥammad Jamīl Ash-Shaṭṭī, *Rawḍ al-Bashar fī A'yān Dimishq fī al-Qarn at-Thalith 'Ashar* (Damascus: Dār al-Yaqzah al-'Arabīyyah li at-Talīf wa an-Nashr, 1365/9145), p. 152; Muḥammad Kurd 'Alī, *Kunūz al-Ajdād* (Damascus: Al-Majma' al-Islāmī al-'Arabī, 1370/1950), p. 5.

Ibn Abī Al-'Izz's Life and Work

The name of our commentator is Ṣadr ad-Dīn Abū Al-Ḥassan 'Alī Ibn 'Alā ad-Dīn 'Alī Ibn Shams ad-Dīn Abī 'Abdullah Muḥammad Ibn Sharf ad-Dīn Abī Al-Barakāt Muḥammad Ibn 'Izz ad-Dīn Abī Al-'Izz Ṣāliḥ, commonly known as Ibn Abī Al-'Izz.[31] Originally his family lived in Adhru'at, today called Dir'a, some seventy miles south of Damascus. From there they moved to Damascus, where the commentator's great grandfather, Muḥammad Ibn Abī Al-'Izz was born in 645/1249.

Ibn Abī Al-'Izz's father, 'Alā ad-Dīn (d. 946/1345), was a scholar of Ḥanafī *fiqh*. He delivered sermons at the Mosque of Al-Afrām, taught at the school of Mu'azzamīyyah, and served as a judge assisting the chief judge (*qāḍī al-quḍāt*) 'Imad ad-Dīn At-Ṭarṭusī. His grandfather, Shams ad-Dīn (d. 722/1322) was a very distinguished Ḥanafī jurist and served as chief judge. And his great grandfather, Muḥammad Ibn Abī Al-'Izz, taught at the school of Al-Murshidīyyah. His uncle, Ṣadr ad-Dīn Sulaymān Ibn Abī Al-'Izz (d. 677/1278), was also a great Ḥanafī scholar and writer, and served as chief judge in Syria and Egypt. Sulaymān's descendants also distinguished themselves as judges, muftis and professors.

Ibn Abī Al-'Izz was born into this distinguished family of scholars and judges on Dhul-Ḥijjah 22, 731 A.H./September 25, 1331 C.E. Naturally, he had learned first from his family and seems to have completed his studies with them at an early age. Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah said that he started teaching at Qīmāzīyyah School at the age of seventeen in the year 748. This school had been built by Ṣarim ad-Dīn Qā'imaz, one of the descendants of Ṣalāh ad-Dīn Al-Ayyūbī, for teaching Ḥanafī *fiqh*. In 771/1369, Ibn Abī Al-'Izz moved to the Ruknīyyah School, which was founded in 621 A.H. by Amīr Rukn ad-Dīn Mankūras. In 784/1382, he started teaching at

[31] For more on Ibn Abī Al-'Izz, see Taqi ad-Dīn Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah, *Tārīkh Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah*, ed. by 'Adnān Durwaysh (Damascus, 1977), vol. I, pp. 22, 82-91, 105, 139, 271 and 358-359; Ibn Ḥajar, *Anbā' al-Ghumar*, vol. II, pp. 95-98 and vol. III, p. 50; Ibn Taghrī, *Ad-Dalīl ash-Shāfī' 'alā al-Manhal aṣ-Ṣāfī*, ed. by Fahīm Muḥammad Shaltūt (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, n.d.), vol, I, p. 465; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Quḍāt Dimishq*, p. 201; As-Suyūṭi, *Ḥusn al-Muḥāḍarat*, vol. II, p. 185; Ibn Al-'Imad, *Shadharat ad-Dhahab*, vol. VI, p. 326; Ismā'īl Bāsha, *Hadyat al-'Ārifīn* (Istanbul, 1955), vol. I, p. 726; Ḥajī Khalīfah, *Kashf aẓ-Ẓunūn*, p. 1143.

the 'Izzīyyah School, founded by Abū Al-Faḍl 'Izz ad-Dīn Aybak (d. 645/1249), replacing Qāḍī Al-Hammām after the qāḍi's death.

Along with teaching, Ibn Abī Al-'Izz also delivered sermons at the Afram Mosque (west of As-Ṣāliḥīyyah) founded by Amīr Jamāl ad-Dīn Aqush Al-Afram in 720/1320, as well as at Al-Ḥusbān. Towards the end of 776/1374, he was appointed judge in Damascus in place of Qāḍī Najm ad-Dīn, his cousin, upon the latter's transfer to Egypt. But Najm ad-Dīn resigned three months later and returned to his previous post in Damascus. Ibn Abī Al-'Izz then took over as judge in Egypt, but he also resigned from that post after just two months. Upon returning to Damascus, he resumed teaching at Qīmāzīyyah and also took classes at the Jawharīyyah School.

Ibn Abī Al-'Izz was born and bred in a family of Ḥanafī scholars and judges. All of the schools wherein he taught were dedicated to the teaching of Ḥanafī *fiqh*, and the judgeship he served was also that of a Ḥanafī judge. Despite all of that, he was not a blind follower of the Ḥanafī school; in fact, he was opposed to following one *imām* exclusively or defending the views of one school uncritically. Absolute faith and obedience, he said, is due to the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of the Prophet (peace be on him). No one is above criticism; everyone's views are to be examined based on the criteria of the Qur'ān and Sunnah; if they agree with them, they should be accepted; if they disagree, they are to be rejected. This is the burden of one of his tracts, *Al-Ittibā'*. In it, he reviewed a letter which a contemporary Ḥanafī scholar, Akmal ad-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn Maḥmūd (d. 786/1384) had written, in which he had pleaded for the exclusive following of the Ḥanafī school. Besides objecting, in principle, to this point of view, Ibn Abī Al-'Izz also noted his observations on various issues which the author discussed. He concluded his discussion by saying:

> The correct course for a student is to memorize Allah's Book and ponder it. Similarly, he should memorize the *aḥādīth* of the Prophet (peace be on him), as much as he can, and reflect upon them. Furthermore, he should learn Arabic and grammar to the extent that he can express himself correctly and understand the Qur'ān and Sunnah well as also the writings of the Salaf. After this, he should study the views of different scholars, starting with the Companions and then those who came after them, without making any discrimination between them. When they agree on a point, he should stick to it; but

> when they differ, he should study all the views with an open mind and examine their arguments. Whoever Allah guides is on the right path and whoever He leaves wandering cannot see the light.[32]

Ibn Abī Al-'Izz was very critical of the practice of establishing schools and colleges and dedicating them to the study of a particular school of *fiqh*. It then became the duty of the teachers, he observed, to defend each and every view of that school. The students, too, developed the same attitude and bias. Unfortunately, most of the donors whose contributions led to the establishment of those schools had little knowledge and would explicitly leave conditions in their wills or deeds that would restrict the free exercise of intellect and open pursuit of knowledge. Ibn Abī Al-'Izz was of the opinion that such conditions should not be honored[33] since they violate the spirit of the Qur'ān and Sunnah. It was against some similar conditions that the Prophet (peace be on him) once said, "What has happened to the people that they come up with conditions that are not mentioned in the Book of Allah! Know that all the conditions not found in the Book of Allah, even if they be a hundred conditions, are absolutely null and void."[34] Ibn Abī Al-'Izz also denounced the practice that restricted judges to making rulings only according to a particular *fiqh*. The tradition, too, of appointing four *imāms*, one from each school of *fiqh*, to lead the prayer in the House of Allah at Makkah, he stated, should be discontinued. There should be, he argued, one *imām*, and everyone, irrespective of the *fiqh* school he followed, should pray behind him.[35]

Damascus in Ibn Abī Al-'Izz's time resounded with the ideas which Ibn Taymīyyah (d. 728/1328) had expounded a few decades earlier and which his great disciples, like Muḥammad Ibn 'Uthmān Adh-Dhahabī (d. 738/1337), Ibn Al-Qayyīm (d. 751/1350) and Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1372) had elaborated and defended. Ibn Abī Al-'Izz was deeply influenced by this great upsurge of Salafī thought. This is clear from many things, from the terms he used in his commentary, the concepts he elaborated upon, the method he followed and the scholars he quoted from. Most of the scholars he

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[32] Ibn Abī Al-'Izz, *Al-Ittibā'* (Lahore: Al-Maktabah as-Salafīyyah, 1401 A.H.), p. 72.

[33] Ibid., pp. 73f.

[34] This is part of a *ḥadīth* found in Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, nos. 2168, 2560, 2561 and 2563; Aḥmad, *Musnad*, Vol. 6, pp. 82, 183 and 213.

[35] Ibn Abī Al-'Izz, *Al-Ittibā'*. pp. 74f.

quoted from belonged to this school. (We will discuss this point in greater detail later.)

In the year 784/1382, 'Alī Ibn Aybak[36] (d. 801/1398-9), a regular poet of Damascus, wrote an ode in praise of the Prophet (peace be on him) in the same meter in which the famous ode "*Bānat Su'ād...*" was written by Ka'b Ibn Zuhayr. It was a beautiful poem and received general appreciation. It happened that Ibn Abī Al-'Izz read it and wrote a letter to the poet stating his appreciation of the literary aspect of the ode. In a separate paper, however, he also noted down his remarks about some of its ideas. Some people objected to this note and raised their voices against Ibn Abī Al-'Izz. Ibn Aybak referred the note to some jurists who objected to Ibn Abī Al-'Izz's remarks. The case was brought to the Sultan, who formed a council of scholars and jurists belonging to the different schools and asked for their opinion. The council held many sessions during which it questioned Ibn Abī Al-'Izz and discussed the issue at length. At the end of the fifth session, the council, led by a Shāfi'ī judge, convicted Ibn Abī Al-'Izz for his views, consigned him to jail, removed him from his post, and fined him. The fine was later withdrawn but he had to spend fourteen months in jail.[37]

In all there were eight issues on which Ibn Abī Al-'Izz was convicted. He was accused, for example, of believing that angels are better than prophets. He discussed this issue at length in this Commentary. He opened his discussion of this topic with the following words:

> People have debated the question as to which is superior: angels or human beings that are pious. It is said that the *Ahl as-Sunnah* believe that pious men, or at least the prophets among them, are superior to the angels. The Mu'tazilah, on the contrary, believe in the superiority of the angels. This opinion is also held by a group of the *Ahl as-Sunnah* and the Ṣūfīs. As for the Ash'arīs, some have no opinion on this issue and others are inclined to believe in the superiority of the angels. Shi'ah scholars say that all the imāms are superior to the angels, and exalted some categories of men over some categories of angels, and vice-versa. However, no one worth

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[36] For more about 'Alī Ibn Aybak Ibn 'Abdullah (d. 801/1398-9), see Ibn Al-'Imad, *Shadharat ad-Dhahab*, vol. 7, pp. 8f; Ibn Taghrī, *Ad-Dalīl ash-Shafī*, vol. I, p. 452.

[37] Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah, *Tārīkh*, p. 105; Ibn Ḥajar, *Anba' al-Ghumar bī Abnā' al-'Umar*, vol. II, pp. 95-98.

> mention has said that the angels are superior to some prophets rather than others.

He then goes on to say:

> I was very reluctant to discuss this issue, for it does not avail much and is quite insignificant... Moreover, the Sh. [Aṭ-Ṭaḥāwī] has not touched upon it, either negatively or positively. Probably he deliberately refrained from entering into its discussion. Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, too, kept silent when he was asked about it... Our duty is only to believe in the angels and the prophets. We are not required to believe that one of them is superior to the other. Had it been a duty, there must have been some text to guide us on this issue.

However, he does enter into a discussion, cites the arguments of those who exalt the angels and of those who exalt the prophets and then concludes, "In short, this is an unimportant issue and that is why most of the writers on the subject have not discussed it; and Abū Ḥanīfah kept silent concerning it, as we have said before."[38]

The second issue concerning which he was accused dealt with the possibility of the prophets' committing minor sins. All scholars are agreed that the prophets committed no mistakes with respect to communicating to their people what God revealed to them. Similarly, they are agreed that prophets did not commit grave sins. But they differ on the question of whether prophets may commit a small sin sometimes. Ibn Abī Al-'Izz has not discussed this issue in his Commentary. In the note which he wrote on the ode of Ibn Aybak, he upheld the possibility of prophets sometimes committing minor sins by mistake. It seems that those who indicted him even negated this possibility. If that was the case, they were going against the majority opinion. Ibn Taymīyyah wrote:

> The view that the prophets do not commit grave sins and that they may commit small sins is the view of most scholars of Islam and most of their followers. One can say that this is the view of the majority of the theologians. Abū Al-Ḥassan Al-Amidī has noted that this is the view of the majority of the Ash'arī theologians as well as the majority of the scholars of Qur'ānic exegesis, *ḥadīth* and *fiqh*. What has come down from

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[38] Ibn Abī Al-'Izz, *Sharḥ al-'Aqīdah Aṭ-Ṭaḥāwīyyah*, ed. by Dr. 'Abdullah 'Abdul-Muḥsin At-Turkī and Shu'ayb Al-Arnawūṭ, vol. 1, pp. 410-423.

> the Salaf, the *imāms*, the Companions, the Successors and their successors, is not different from this view.[39]

Qāḍī ʻAyād, the famous Ashʻarī theologian and Mālikī jurist, wrote in his renowned work, *Ash-Shifa'*:

> As for small sins, a group of the Salaf as well as others uphold its possibility. This is also the view of Abū Jaʻfar Aṭ-Ṭabarī and other scholars of *fiqh*, *ḥadīth* and *kalām*... Another group has refrained from saying anything positive on this issue. Rationally, it cannot be ruled out that they might commit small sins, but as for textual sources, there is nothing definitive either way. A third group of jurists and theologians uphold their absolute infallibility.[40]

It seems that those who indicted Ibn Abī Al-ʻIzz on this issue belonged to this third group.

The other points on which Ibn Abī Al-ʻIzz was indicted were problems such as whether it is correct to say, "The Prophet is sufficient for me," "Prophet, intercede on my behalf," or "Had the Prophet not been created, the heavens would not have been brought into being." Concerning the first statement, Ibn Abī Al-ʻIzz seems to have been inspired by what Ibn Al-Qayyīm wrote on this issue in *Zād al-Maʻād*.[41] The second point has been taken up in the Commentary under the discussion of intercession. As for the third statement, Ibn Abī Al-ʻIzz pointed out that such statements can only be made on the basis of textual sources, and since there were no relevant texts, one should refrain from making such statements.

Some time after Ibn Abī Al-ʻIzz was released from prison, one of his well-wishers pleaded with the emir, Sayf ad-Dīn Balghuk Ibn ʻAbdullah An-Nāṣirī, to reinstate him in his position and to restore

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[39] Ibn Taymīyyah, *Majmūʻ Fatāwa Shaykh al-Islām*, ed. by ʻAbdul-Raḥmān Ibn Qāsim and his son Muḥammad (Riyadh, 1398 A.H.), vol. IV, p. 319.

[40] Qāḍī ʻAyād, *Ash-Shifa' fī Taʻrīf Huquq*, p. 144. Also see Al-Āmidī, *Al-Iḥkām fī Uṣūl al-Aḥkām* (Cairo: Dār al-Maʻarif, 1332/1914), vol. I, p. 244; Ibn Amīr Al-Ḥajj, *At-Taqrīr wa at-Taḥbīr* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīyyah, 1403/1983), vol. II, p. 224; Muḥammad Ibn ʻAlī Ash-Shawkānī, *Irshād al-Fuḥūl* (Cairo: Al-Ḥalabī, 1356 A.H.), pp. 33ff.

[41] Ibn Al-Qayyīm, *Zād al-Maʻād*, ed. by Shuʻayb Al-Arnawūṭ and ʻAbdul-Qādir Al-Arnawūṭ (Beirut: Mu'assasat Ar-Risālah, 1399/1979), vol. I, pp. 35ff. The reader may refer to it for details.

his stipend. The emir agreed and issued the relevant orders. Ibn Abī Al-'Izz resumed teaching at Jawharīyyah and delivered sermons in the Mosque of Afram in the month of Rabi' al-Awwal in 791/1389. But this occupation proved to be short-lived. The following year, in the month of Dhul-Qi'dah, death overtook him and he met his Lord. He was buried in the cemetery of Qasiyūn. May Allah have mercy on him and shower His blessings on him.

Ibn Abī Al-'Izz did not write much. Besides the Commentary, which was his magnum opus and which we shall introduce shortly, he is said to have discussed, in a book entitled *At-Tanbīḥ 'alā Mushkilat al-Hidāyah*, some of the difficult issues of the famous work of Ḥanafī *fiqh*, *Al-Hidāyah* by Abū Bakr Burhān ad-Dīn 'Alī Al-Marghinānī (d. 593/1197). No manuscript of this book seems to be extant at the present time. Another tract, *Ṣiḥḥat al-Iqtida' bi al-Mukhalif*, was written to defend the practice of offering prayers behind an *imām* of a different school. A manuscript of this tract is preserved in the Tatwan Library in Morocco, and a photocopy of it may also be found in the library of Shaykh Ḥammad Al-Anṣārī of Madinah. Our sources[42] also mention another book which is no longer present, *An-Nūr al-Lāmi' fi ma yu'malu bihī fi al-Jami'*. The title implies that the book is about what one should do in the Mosque of Banū Umayyah in Damascus. Finally, we have already mentioned his small but fine book, *Al-Ittibā'*. This was first published in Lahore in 1401 A.H. and then in Oman in 1405 A.H.

The *Creed*

In his work, Dr. Szegin listed some thirty-two extant manuscripts of the *Creed* which were penned in different periods of time. The earliest one, which is preserved in Alexandria, was written in 783 A.H. It consists of six folios.[43] The editors of the commentary written by 'Abdul-Ghanī Al-Maydānī referred to earlier, stated that they have compared the text of the *Creed* with a manuscript written even earlier, in 732 A.H.[44] The earliest extant commentary on the *Creed*, by Najm ad-Dīn At-Turkī, was written in 646 A.H.[45]

[42] See Ismā'īl Bāsha, *Hadyat al-'Ārifīn*, vol. I, p. 726.

[43] Fūwād Sezgin, *Tārīkh at-Tūrāth al-'Arabī*, vol. I, part III, p. 96.

[44] 'Abdul-Ghanī Al-Maydānī, *Sharḥ al-'Aqīdah At-Ṭaḥāwīyyah*, p. 10.

[45] Fūwād Sezgin, op. cit., p. 97.

From whatever angle one looks at the *Creed* - format, language, ideas covered - it is definitely an authentic product of the late 3rd/9th or early 4th/10th century. The author begins with a statement on *tawḥīd* that Allah is One without a partner, All-Powerful, Eternal and Everlasting, unlike anything, beyond understanding and imagination, Ever-Living and All-Sustaining, Creator and Lord; He is qualified with attributes, essential and active, from eternity; what He wills happens and what He does not will does not happen; He has pre-ordained all things and they happen as He ordained them; and He guides whom He wills and He leaves astray whom He wills. Then he discusses the prophecy of Muḥammad (peace be on him), the Qur'ān, Beatific Vision, and he elaborates the point that Islam is to believe in the revelation and to submit to it. After this he returns to the Prophet's ascension, his fountain and his intercession. He had introduced fore-ordainment in the course of his statements on *tawḥīd*; here he resumes the discussion and goes into detail; he will also return to it a third time while discussing free will and responsibility. This feature, treating subjects in sections, was lamented by the commentator. Unfortunately, this style did not occur on just one issue. The question of God's attributes is also treated in the same way; some of His attributes are discussed in the beginning and some, like transcendence (*fawqīyyah*), ascending the Throne, descending to the lower heaven, hands, face and eyes, are discussed towards the end. This practice, however, was not peculiar to Aṭ-Ṭaḥāwī. Al-Ash'arī also touched on certain themes more than once in his *Ibānah*.

Aṭ-Ṭaḥāwī discusses at length issues regarding sin, faith and salvation. Then he mentions some practical issues, such as prayer behind a Muslim who is not pious or who has heretical views, or pilgrimage and *jihād* under an unjust ruler. In the end, he discusses things concerning life after death, the beliefs about the Companions of the Prophet, the question of *imāmah*, the place of saints and miracles. Finally, he ends with the affirmation that God's religion in all ages is one which must be followed and dissension must be avoided.

Issues which came up for discussion in later ages, such as the infallibility of the prophets, do not occur in either the text or the commentary. The text is completely free from any anachronism. On the other hand, practical issues, like wiping during ablution the back of the foot while wearing leather socks, which are subjects of *fiqh* not theology but which were debated at that time, are mentioned in the *Creed*, as they are mentioned in the *Ibānah* of Al-Ash'arī.

The language of the *Creed* is not the technical language of *kalām*. It is, as the commentator observed, a flowery language suitable for sermons. In this respect too, Aṭ-Ṭaḥāwī's *Creed* resembles the *Creed* of Al-Ash'arī, although the latter is comparatively more technical.

The Commentary

The commentator has divided the text into section. Most of these sections form a separate article of the *Creed* while some do not, being mere elaborations of preceding articles. This is why the sections have not been numbered in most editions of the book. We, on the other hand, have numbered the sections simply for the sake of reference; they should not be understood as delineating separate articles.

Commentary follows each section of the *Creed*. This method gives the commentator greater freedom for comment and elaboration, and he has fully utilized that freedom and presented a sizable commentary, larger perhaps than any other. At times, however, the text is very clear and the commentator has simply noted that it needs no comment or further elaboration.

Ibn Abī Al-'Izz wrote his commentary some five hundred years after the *Creed* was composed. A lot of water had flowed under the bridge during the intervening centuries. Ibn Abī Al-'Izz took due notice of all the developments in religious sciences and *kalām* which had taken place during that period. He also touched upon issues which Ṣūfī thought and experience had raised and concerning which Ibn Taymīyyah and Ibn Al-Qayyīm had addressed in their writings. The theological views that Ibn Abī Al-'Izz usually reacts to are those of the main Muslim sects: the Jahmīyyah, the Mu'tazilah, the Qadarīyyah, the Jabrīyyah and the Rafiḍah. He also comments on the Ash'arīs and later Ḥanafīs, whom he claims diverged from the path of the Salaf. Concerning religions other than Islam, he has very little comment.

Ibn Abī Al-'Izz was very critical of *kalām* and he tried to keep his commentary free from its evil influence. His basic objection to *kalām* was that it did not give the priority to revelation which revelation deserves. Instead of deriving its basic premises, concepts and arguments from the Qur'ān and Sunnah, *kalām* derives them from reason. This criticism is primarily directed towards the Jahmīyyah and the Mu'tazilah, who worked out a rationalistic doctrine of unity and, as a consequence, negated God's attributes.

On a lower level, however, this criticism also applies to the Ash'arīs and other mutakallimūn who first formed an imaginary idea of transcendence (*tanzīh*) and then denied the reality of a part of divine attributes. Some theologians rejected outright some concepts that are clearly and unequivocally stated in the texts; others took them as symbolic and interpreted them metaphorically. The Mu'tazilah, for example, rejected the possibility of God's vision in the Hereafter, and the Ash'arīs treated God's ascension on the Throne as symbolic of His authority.

The *mutakallimūn* also formed ideas that conflict with common sense and reason. An example is the Ash'arī doctrine regarding knowledge of the morally good and right. They deny that we can know these common truths with our reason; the only way to know them, they say, is revelation. But this view conflicts not only with common sense but also with many statements of the Qur'ān and Sunnah. The doctrine also deprives human beings, to note just one consequence, of any criterion to determine the veracity of a prophet except by his miracles. We are left with nothing to judge whether his message is good and acceptable or whether his life is noble and worthy of imitation.

Mutakallimūn mostly treat the Qur'ān as a book that states faith and gives rhetorical arguments in its support. As for demonstrative proofs, one has to look for them in their *kalām*. This is not true. The Qur'ān does offer rational arguments and convincing proofs, but the theologians do not reflect on them and rarely appreciate them. On the other hand, the arguments which they offer turn out, on close examination, to be hardly conclusive. This fact has been admitted by a number of their own leaders.[46]

Ibn Abī Al-'Izz does not denounce all *kalām*. He only rejects that *kalām* which contradicts revelation or reason. Nor does he oppose new terms, concepts and arguments which *kalām* took either from the natural sciences or philosophy, or developed by itself, such as body, substance and accident. One should first study such new terms, he says, determine what they mean, and then see whether they may be accepted or must be rejected.[47]

In commenting on Aṭ-Ṭaḥāwī's *Creed*, Ibn Abī Al-'Izz makes it a point to follow the method of the Salaf. This means, first, that in every issue that he faces he first turns to the Qur'ān and Sunnah and follows what they state, rather than first following reason. In

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[46] See infra, pp. 148-154.

[47] See infra, pp. 57f, 168.

speaking about God, for instance, he asserts about Him what He or His Prophet said about Him, and negates about Him what He or His Prophet negated about Him. He does not predicate anything of God simply on the basis of reason, nor does he prefer any term to describe Him if there is a term already stated in the revelation for the same purpose. To give an example, theologians use the term *qadim* to describe God's eternity. This is not a pleasing term for it merely means old and ancient, something that precedes another thing, but not that which precedes all things. The Qur'ān, on the other hand, uses the word Al-Awwal, the First, which means the One That precedes all and to Whom everything returns.[48] Hence, one should adhere to what the Qur'ān and the Prophet say about God.

Again, when the Qur'ān speaks about Allah, it describes in detail His positive attributes, that He is Living, Knowing, Powerful, Seeing, Hearing, and so on. But in describing Him negatively, the Qur'ān is brief; it simply says, "Nothing is like Him." This is in clear contrast to the way of the *mutakallimūn* who never tire of saying that God is not this, nor is He that, and so on, trying to reduce His positive attributes to a minimum. The truth of this statement may be confirmed by referring to the Mu'tazilī description of Allah's attributes that Al-Ash'arī reproduced in his *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn*.[49]

Like the Salaf, Ibn Abī Al-'Izz takes the texts of the Qur'ān and the Sunnah at their face or literal value and he avoids interpreting them symbolically. He takes God's descent to the lower heaven or ascent to the Throne at face value. Similarly, he takes God's hand, face and eyes literally and avoids interpreting them metaphorically as the *mutakallimūn* do. However, to say that these attributes are real is not to say that they resemble the attributes of the creatures. Allah descends and ascends but not as humans do. Similarly, He has hands and eyes but not as humans have. To assert the reality of these attributes is not to anthropomorphize God. If to assert knowledge or will to God is not to liken Him with any creature, why should asserting hands and eyes to him be likening Him to man? In either case, we add the qualification that one attribute is not the like the other attribute.

This has been stated by the Salaf from the beginning, by scholars of *ḥadīth* as well as *fiqh*, by Imāms Mālik and Aḥmad as

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[48] See infra, pp. 36-39.

[49] Al-Ash'arī, *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn*, ed. by Helmut Ritter (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1980), pp. 155f.

well as Imām Abū Ḥanīfah. But Ibn Taymīyyah added a new dimension to it when he said that general predicates, or universals, are mere concepts in the mind; they do not refer to any external reality. What exists in reality is something particular. There is no will, knowledge, hand or eye as such; what exists out there is this will or that will, this knowledge or that knowledge, this hand or that hand, and so on. No one will is the same as another will, and no one hand is the same as another hand. Hence, to say that Allah has will, knowledge, a hand or eye is not to anthropomorphize these attributes; Allah's will is Allah's will, and man's will is man's will; they are not alike. Similarly, Allah's hand is Allah's hand and man's hand is man's hand and they are not the same. There is nothing out there in which the divine and the human share.[50] This nominalism is the contribution of Ibn Taymīyyah to the thought of the Salaf and it was wholeheartedly endorsed by Ibn Abī Al-'Izz.[51]

In understanding the text of the Qur'ān and Sunnah, Ibn Abī Al-'Izz adheres to what the Salaf (the Companions, their Successors and the recognized *imāms*) have stated. For instance, the Salaf have understood the texts which say that Allah is above the world, above the heavens, and above the Throne to mean that Allah is not in the world, but above and beyond the world. On the other hand, they have understood the texts which say that Allah is with us and that He is nearer to us than our jugular vein to mean that He is with us in knowledge, not in being. He knows us intimately. Both understandings are real; the latter may appear to be a metaphorical interpretation, but it is not. It is just the face meaning (*az-zāhīr*) of the text.[52] We have to go by the Salaf's understanding of the texts for they knew and understood them better than we. The principle of following the understanding of the Salaf is not confined to the interpretation of texts; it extends to the understanding of the values and norms of Islamic life, as well as the conduct (*sulūk*) of the individual. Ibn Abī Al-'Izz's comments on mystical experience and Ṣūfī *ṭarīqah* illustrate this point.[53]

We observed earlier that one of the weaknesses of *kalām* was that it developed ideas that conflicted not only with revelation but

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[50] Ibn Taymīyyah elaborated this view at various places in his writings. For example, *Majmu'at al-Rasā'il wa al-Masā'il*, ed. by Rashīd Riḍa (Cairo, n.d.), vol. IV, pp. 15-22; Ar-Risālah at-Tadmurīyyah (Riyadh: Imām Muḥammad Ibn Sa'ūd Islamic University Press, 1403 A.H.), pp. 79f.

[51] See infra, pp. 28f.

[52] See infra, p. 234.

[53] See infra, pp. 21-23, 446ff.

also with reason and human nature. As an example, we cited the Ash'arī view regarding ethical knowledge. There are other cases also: the Ash'arī view that there is nothing obligatory on God; that His acts have no purpose or end; that nothing causes anything; that human will is absolutely ineffective; and that every act is done by God. Ibn Taymīyyah and his school criticized all these ideas on grounds of reason as well as revelation. They maintained that there is no contradiction between authentic tradition and clear reason. If there arises an apparent conflict, it may be due to the tradition not being authentic or what is believed to be rational not being something established but something merely believed to be so. This led the school of Ibn Taymīyyah to thoroughly examine rational statements as well as to closely scrutinize tradition. Ibn Abī Al-'Izz followed this practice in his commentary, although it must be admitted that at times he quotes *aḥādīth* which are weak and unauthentic. (We have pointed out such *aḥādīth* in our notes.)

Tawḥīd for *kalām* is an issue concerning how to maintain Allah's unity in view of the plurality of His attributes. Ibn Abī Al-'Izz addresses this issue and goes into the relation between essence and attributes.[54] But, he points out, the *tawḥīd* that the Qur'ān expounds is not of this nature. Qur'ānic *tawḥīd* is to affirm in belief and in action that Allah is the only object of worship, prayer, reverence, love, submission and obedience. No one else can command total submission, absolute obedience, extreme reverence and profound love. This unity of Godhead (*tawḥīd al-ilahīyyah*), the Qur'ān maintains, follows from the unity of the Creator and Lord (*tawḥīd al-rubūbīyyah*), which is part of the natural endowment (*fiṭrah*) of man. It is not something to be argued but to be discovered. Ibn Abī Al-'Izz elaborates on the concept of *fiṭrah* very cogently. Of course, he has taken his ideas from Ibn Taymīyyah, but Ibn Abī Al-'Izz develops them further.

Prophets and, above all, Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on them all) realized most perfectly the *tawḥīd al-ilāhīyyah* in their lives. But the *tawḥīd* which the Ṣūfīs try to experience is *tawḥīd al-rubūbīyyah*. This is not the end, they should know, which Allah's revelation expounds or His prophets preach. In fact, mere recognition that the Creator and the Lord is one, without accepting

[54] See infra, pp. 53ff.

Him as God and submitting to Him, does not qualify a person as a believer or faithful, not to speak of as a walī or saint.[55]

Ibn Abī Al-'Izz does not distinguish between the essential and active attributes of Allah; all His attributes are eternal. He is not only Living, Knowing and Powerful from eternity, but He is also creating things and providing for them from eternity. This is the belief of the Salaf, the scholars of *ḥadīth* as well as Abū Ḥanīfah and his colleagues. To the objection that this would then imply the eternity of the world, Ibn Abī Al-'Izz's answer is that it only implies the eternity of things as a class, not of any particular thing or things. Moreover, it does not violate the truth that Allah is the First.

Speech, too, is an eternal attribute of Allah. He has been speaking from eternity, but not as the Ash'arīs and Māturidīyyah believe. For the latter, Allah's speech is one eternal idea within Him, an inner speech (*kalām nafsī*) of which the Torah, Gospel and Qur'ān are interpretations in Hebrew, Syriac and Arabic. Hence, for them the Qur'ān is Allah's word, not in the sense that He has spoken it but in the sense that it is the interpretation of His eternal speech. His eternal speech is uncreated but its interpretation in different languages is created.[56] For Ibn Abī Al-'Izz, on the other hand, the Qur'ān is really the word of Allah, not its interpretation. He is the One Who has spoken and articulated it; and it is this articulated speech which Gabriel heard from Allah and communicated to the Prophet (peace be on him). And although Allah's speech is an expression of His will, that is, He speaks when and as He likes, His speech is not part of the created world; it is not something created. It stands with Him in a special relation: in one respect it is with Him, which is why the Prophet (peace be on him) sought shelter in Allah's words while no Muslim may seek protection in anything non-divine; on the other hand, it is the expression of Allah's will. In view of this dual relation, the Salaf have defined that the Qur'ān is uncreated but declined to say that it is eternal. Although the Qur'ān is uncreated, our recitation of it and our writing it are our actions and are created, like we are.

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[55] See infra, pp. 16, 21ff.

[56] This is a rather simple statement of a more complicated position. For details, see Al-Māturīdī, *Kitāb at-Tawḥīd*, ed. by Fatḥullah Khulayf (Alexandria: Dār al-Jāmi'at al-Misrīyyah), pp. 58f, XXI-II; Abū 'Adhbah, *Ar-Rawdah al-Bahīyyah* (Hyderabad, 1322 A.H.), pp. 43-54; Al-Juwaynī, *Kitāb al-Irshād*, ed. by M. Yūsuf Mūsā 'Alī 'Abdul-Mun'im (Cairo: Al-Khānjī, 1950), pp. 99-129; Al-'Ijī, *Al-Mawāqif* (Beirut: 'Alam al-Kutub, n.d.), pp. 293f.

Ibn Abī Al-'Izz distinguishes between the creative and the prescriptive will of Allah. The former is meant in the sentence, "What God wills happens and what He does not will, does not happen." The latter is meant in the sentence, "God wills that we should worship and obey Him." In the case of the former, it is Allah Who acts; in the latter case, He asks someone else to act. Again, the object of the former may be good or evil, while the object of the latter is always good. In other words, creative will does not necessarily imply that God must like and approve of its object; prescriptive will, on the other hand, does. That is, God likes and approves of what He asks anyone to do. In light of this clarification, it would not be difficult to affirm that evil is also from God, that it is He Who creates it, but it does not then follow that He approves of it. God does not create absolute evil. Every evil that He brings into existence is a condition or a means to something good. No evil is an end in itself.[57]

It is also necessary to see that when God wills man to do an act, it is not necessary that He also help him do it. If He helps him, that will be a favor from Him, but if he does not, and lets him defy Him and do evil, He does him no injustice. He has created man, given him power, shown him the right path and asked him to submit; it is then for man to submit or defy. If Allah does not further help him in carrying out His command, it is no injustice on His part. But if He does help him, it is a favor and a blessing from Him.

Allah has power over everything, but this does not negate, says Ibn Abī Al-'Izz, causality between things or the efficacy of human will. He has made one thing the cause of another thing, not only in the sense the Ash'arīs allow, that one thing is the condition for another thing, but also in the sense that one thing produces another thing. Similarly, He has given power to human will. Those who deny this power or negate causality do not do justice with the texts of the Qur'ān and Sunnah. Ibn Abī Al-'Izz further distinguishes between a power that precedes an action and is the basis for God's commandment and a power in the form of will and determination that coexists with an action. It is in light of this distinction that he explains the texts related to this subject.[58]

On the question regarding the order of distinction between the first four rightly-guided caliphs, Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān and 'Alī, Aṭ-Ṭaḥāwī mentions that the order of their caliphates is the order of their honor or distinction. Ibn Abī Al-'Izz has endorsed this

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[57] See infra, p. 204.

[58] See infra, pp. 378f.

view, noting that it is the view of the Salaf in general. This implies that 'Uthmān is superior to 'Alī. However, Abū Ḥanīfah, as it appears in the *Manāqib* literature on him, exalted 'Alī over 'Uthmān.[59] One may ask how it is that Aṭ-Ṭaḥāwī opposed Abū Ḥanīfah on this point. The answer may be that probably the leaders of Abū Ḥanīfah's school differed from him on this point and sided with the majority of the Salaf with Aṭ-Ṭaḥāwī following suit. The writers of *Al-Fiqh al-Ākbar* went a step further when they attributed this view to Abū Ḥanīfah himself.[60] Since Ibn Abī Al-'Izz had no doubt about the authenticity of this *Creed*, he was satisfied that he also had Abū Ḥanīfah on his side.

Text of the Commentary and its Translation

Ibn Abī Al-'Izz's commentary on the *Creed* of Aṭ-Ṭaḥāwī was first published in 1349/1930 by Al-Matba'ah as-Salafiyyah in Makkah on the basis of a single manuscript which was full of mistakes. Sh. 'Abdullah Ibn Ḥassan Āl Ash-Shaykh, by whose efforts the book was published, formed a committee of scholars who went through the text and corrected its mistakes. The renowned Egyptian *ḥadīth* scholar, Sh. Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir, revised this edition and published the book through Dar al-Ma'arif in Cairo in 1373/1953. However, he did not have any new manuscript to refer to. In 1381/1961, a group of scholars from Syria produced a third edition of the Commentary based on a manuscript written in 1322 A.H. which was no less faulty. In correcting it, the group referred to the edition of Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir. They published the book with brief notes by Sh. Nāṣir ad-Dīn Al-Albānī concerning the *aḥādīth* mentioned in the Commentary. Sh. Shū'ayb Al-Arnawūṭ, a Syrian *ḥadīth* scholar, produced another edition from Syria in 1401/1981.

Since he did not have access to any new manuscripts, he relied on the edition of Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir. However, he corrected some of the earlier mistakes and commented in some detail on the *aḥādīth* of the book in footnotes. A year later, Dr. 'Abdul-Raḥmān 'Umayrah produced the fifth edition of the book from Cairo. In preparing this edition, he referred to a manuscript preserved in the library of the famous 9th/15th century scholar, Jalāl ad-Dīn As-

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[59] See Abū Zahrah, *Abū Ḥanīfah*, p. 169.

[60] See Mullah 'Alī Al-Qarī, *Sharḥ al-Fiqh al-Akbar* (Beirut, 1404/1984), p. 98.

Suyūṭī in Egypt, along with the earlier editions of the work. For some unstated reasons, however, he did not base his edition on that manuscript. A sixth edition of the book was published in Beirut in 1405/1984-5 with notes and references regarding *aḥādīth* by Bashīr Muḥammad 'Uyūn. He based his edition on the earlier editions and barely added anything new.

The best and most correct edition of the *Commentary* is the one which Dr. 'Abdullah Ibn 'Abdul-Muḥsin At-Turkī, Rector of Imām Muḥammad Ibn Sa'ūd Islamic University in Riyadh, and Sh. Shū'ayb Al-Arnawūṭ, the editor of the fourth edition mentioned above, collaborated on and published in two volumes through the *Mu'assasat ar-Risālah* in Beirut in 1988. Their work is based on four manuscripts of the *Commentary*: one written in 782 A.H. during the lifetime of the commentator and compared with the original manuscript; another written in 883 A.H. and also compared with the original manuscript; the third was a photocopy of a manuscript written in 1217 A.H.; and the fourth was also written in the same year. In their introduction, the editors discussed at length the life and work of the author and the commentator, whereas the editors of the earlier editions had only briefly touched upon these subjects. Another distinction of this edition is that it contains full and detailed comments on the *aḥādīth* and traditions which occur in the Commentary.

In this regard, Sh. Shū'ayb Al-Arnawūṭ greatly improved upon his own comments in his earlier edition. Finally, the editors noted in the footnotes the works of Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymīyyah and his disciple, Ibn al-Qayyīm, mentioning the pages where they dealt with the issues which the commentator discusses. In places they have also pointed out the passages which the commentator has reproduced or abridged.

In translating the Commentary, I had the editions of Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākīr, Sh. Shū'ayb Al-Arnawūṭ and Nāṣir ad-Dīn Al-Albānī before me. The edition of Dr. 'Abdullah At-Turkī and Shū'ayb Al-Arnawūṭ had not appeared by that time; I received it when I had almost finished the first draft of the translation. However, in revising the draft I did refer to their edition on many occasions. But except in a few places, the differences between theirs and other editions were not of much significance.

In preparing the references to the *aḥādīth*, I have relied mainly upon the edition of Dr. 'Abdullah At-Turkī and Sh. Shū'ayb Al-Arnawūṭ. In general, I retained the references to better known works

and dropped the references to lesser known works, unless such references were indispensable. I have also summarized their detailed observations. For convenience of reference, I have often mentioned sections and chapters of different *ḥadīth* collections along with the numbers of the *aḥādīth* which they have given. I also noted the works of Ibn Taymīyyah and Ibn Al-Qayyīm which deal with the issues that Ibn Abī Al-'Izz discussed.

Concerning the personalities and scholars mentioned in the Commentary, the authors of the various editions have had little comment. Dr. 'Abdullah At-Turkī and Sh. Shū'ayb Al-Arnawūṭ introduced them very briefly. I have written about them in more detail, taking note also of what has appeared concerning them in languages other than Arabic. As the translation is meant for readers not necessarily aware of Islamic history and personalities, I have also given biographies of a number of figures whom Dr. Turkī and Sh. Al-Arnawūṭ did not feel the need to discuss as their readers are more or less conversant with Islamic history. In an appendix at the end of the book, I have put together the different sections of the *Creed* and indicated the pages where they occur in the translation. In this manner, the reader may have a look at the *Creed* as a whole.

COMMENTATOR'S PREFACE

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.
All praise is for Allah. We praise Him, seek His help, ask for His forgiveness; and we seek refuge in Allah from the evil in our souls and from the wrong of our deeds. Whomever Allah guides, there is no one to misguide him; and whomever He leaves astray, there is none to guide him. I bear witness that there is no god except Allah, the One, with no partner. I also bear witness that our revered Muḥammad is His servant and messenger. May Allah bless him and his family, his companions and his followers, and shower on them peace and favors.

The science of the principles of faith (*uṣūl ad-dīn*) is the noblest of all the sciences, for the dignity of a science depends upon the dignity of the subject it studies. It is the *fiqh al-ākbar* (higher knowledge) in contrast to *fiqh al-furu* (knowledge of practical rules). For this reason, Imām Abū Ḥanīfah named what he stated and gathered together in writing concerning the foundations of the religion *fiqh al-ākbar*. A person's need for this understanding is greater than any other need. It is a greater necessity than any other necessity, for there is no life, pleasure or tranquility for hearts except by knowing their Lord, object of adoration and Creator, by His names, attributes and acts. In knowing that, he will love Him above everything, and he will seek all that brings him close to Him and he will not pursue anything else of His creation.

It is impossible for unaided human reason to know all of the above and to realize it in detail. Therefore, the mercy of the Merciful led Him to send messengers to teach about Him and to call people to belief in Him. Whoever responded (positively) to them received good tidings from the prophets, and whoever opposed them received warnings from them. The key and essence of their missions was to impart knowledge of the Adored, may He be glorified, through His names, attributes and actions. From beginning to end, the goal of their prophecies was built upon this knowledge.

This is thus followed by two important principles. First is the knowledge of the way to Allah and that way is His Shari'ah, which consists of His commands and prohibitions. Second is the knowledge of the happiness and bounties which are reserved for those who come to Allah by following the proper way.

Those who know Allah best are the best followers of the path to Him and the most knowledgeable of the life that awaits them when they come to Him. For this reason, Allah called what He revealed to

His messengers *rūh*, or 'spirit', because the real life is dependent on it. He also called it light (*nūr*) because guidance is dependent upon it. Allah, the Most High, says, "By His command He sends the spirit to any of His servants He pleases" [40:15], and "Thus We have sent, by Our command, the spirit to you. You knew not before what was Revelation and what was Faith. But We have made it (the Qur'ān) a light, wherewith We guide such of Our servants as We will. And you guide (men) to the Straight Path, the Way of Allah to Whom belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on earth. Behold all affairs tend towards Allah" [42:52-53]. There is no life except through what the Messenger brought and there is no light except what is lit by it. It is the cure and healing, as Allah says, "Say: it is a guide and healing for the Believers" [41:44]. Although it is a cure and healing for anyone, since only the Believers benefit from it, they are specifically mentioned.

Allah sent His messengers with guidance and the true religion. Aside from what they brought, there is no true guidance. There is no doubt that it is obligatory upon every individual to believe in what the Messenger brought in general. There is also no doubt that to know the detailed matters of what the Messenger brought is an obligation upon the community as a whole (*farḍ kifāyah*). This detailed knowledge make up part of the knowledge which is required for preaching the revelation, for elaborating on the Qur'ān, for teaching the Book and the Sunnah, for guarding the message against corruption, for disseminating its ideas, for enjoining good and forbidding evil, for calling men to the Way of the Lord with wisdom, effective persuasion and cogent argument, and for many other things which Allah has made incumbent upon the Believers. Therefore, it is their collective responsibility (to know and understand what the Prophet brought in detail).

As for individuals themselves, the obligation upon them varies according to their talents, abilities, knowledge and what they have been specifically commanded to do. The responsibility of one who is incapable of understanding a particular idea or enter into its depths is not the same as the responsibility of one who has such a capability. The responsibility of one who hears a particular text or who can explain a text and work out its implications is not the same as the responsibility of one who has not heard such a text or who does not understand it. Obviously, the responsibilities of a jurist, scholar of *ḥadīth*, or ruler differ from the responsibilities of those who do not hold such positions.

One must realize that the majority of those who strayed concerning this topic or those who failed to recognize the truth have

done so because they have not paid due attention to following what the Messenger brought, or they did not ponder it or appreciate its arguments that lead to this knowledge. Once they turned away from the Book of Allah, they went astray. As Allah states, "But whenever My guidance comes to you, whoever follows My guidance will not go astray or be distressed. As for him who turns his face away from My message, his living will become straitened, and on the Day of Resurrection, We will raise him sightless. He will say, 'My Lord! Why have You raised me blind when I had been able to see?' He will reply, So will it be. My signs and messages came to you, but you forgot them all. So will you be forgotten this day." [20:123-126]

Ibn 'Abbās said, "Allah has guaranteed that whoever reads the Qur'ān and acts upon it will never go astray in this life, nor will he suffer misery in the next," and then he recited the above verses. At-Tirmidhī and other compilers of *ḥadīth* reported on the authority of 'Alī that the Prophet (peace be on him) said, "There will be trials and tribulations." The people asked, "How will we save ourselves?" He replied, "Adhere to the Book of Allah, which speaks of those who have gone before, as well as of those who will come later, and tells the truth in clear and definite terms in matters concerning which you disagree. Whoever neglects it out of conceit will be humiliated by Allah. Whoever looks for guidance elsewhere will be misled by Allah. It is the cord of Allah, which will never break, the Wise Message and the Right Path, which will never be distorted by evil minds or corrupted by wicked tongues. Its mysteries will never end, nor will scholars ever be satisfied by what they know of it. Whoever speaks according to it has spoken the truth; whoever acts upon it will be rewarded; whoever rules according to it does justice; and whoever calls to it invites to the Straight Path."[61] There are many more verses and *aḥādīth* of similar meaning.

Allah does not accept any way of life from the first or last of mankind unless it is in accordance with the way of life prescribed

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[61] At-Tirmidhī, *Sunan* (the edition referred to here is the one edited by Muḥammad Fūwād 'Abdul-Bāqī, Cairo: Maktabat Al-Ḥalabī and Sons, 1388/1968, second edition; henceforth referred to as At-Tirmidhī), *ḥadīth* no. 2908; Ad-Dārimī, *Sunan* (Beirut: Dār Al-Kutub Al-'Ilmīyyah; henceforth referred to as Ad-Dārimī), vol. 2, p. 435; Al-Baghawī, *Sharḥ as-Sunnah*, ed. by Shu'ayb Al-Arnawūṭ and Muḥammad Ash-Shawish (Beirut: Al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1390/1971; henceforth referred to as Al-Baghawī), *ḥadīth* no. 1181. Ibn Kathīr discussed this *ḥadīth* in his *Faḍā'il al-Qur'ān* (Beirut: Dār Al-Andulus, 1403/1983), p. 10, and said that it is the statement of 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib and not that of the Prophet (peace be on him).

through the tongues of His messengers. He has declared that He rejects all that people ascribe to Him except what the prophets stated about Him. He states, "Glory be to your Lord, the Lord of Honor and Power. He is free from what they ascribe to Him. And peace be on the messengers. And praise be to Allah, the Lord and Cherisher of the Worlds" [37:180-182]. He has thus exalted Himself above the unbecoming attributes the unbelievers ascribed to Him. Then He blessed the prophets because they did not ascribe any shortcoming or defect to Him. Then He praised Himself because of His unique attributes that entitle Him to complete praise.

The best people of all generations, the Companions of the Prophet (peace be on him) and their righteous Successors, followed the way which the Prophet (peace be on him) had shown. The Companions taught it to the Successors and the Successors followed the Companions. They thus walked on the path the Prophet (peace be on him) blazed. As Allah says in His Noble Book, "Say: This is my way; I do call to God with full knowledge, I and those who follow me" [12:108]. (By the Arabic structure of the verse,) "those who follow me" could relate back to "I do call to God," [meaning, 'I call to God as do those who follow me,') which is evidence that those who follow him are the real callers to the way of Allah. Or, it could be referring to "with full knowledge," thus stating clearly that those who follow him are those with full knowledge of what he brought as opposed to others (who do not have such knowledge). Both meanings are sound.

The Prophet (peace be on him) delivered the message clearly and explained it for those who seek the truth. The best generations followed his path and way. Then came generations afterwards who followed their lusts and divided into sects. But then Allah raised for this nation people who protected and restated the foundations and principles of its religion, as the Prophet (peace be on him) stated, "There will always be a group of my nation that will defend the truth. Those who forsake them will not harm them."[62]

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[62]Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, ed. by Muḥammad Fūwād 'Abdul-Bāqī (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā at-Turāth al-'Arabī, first edition, 1375/1965, henceforth referred to as Muslim), *ḥadīth* no. 1920; At-Tirmidhī, 2230; Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*, ed. by Muḥammad Fūwād 'Abdul-Bāqī (Beirut: Dār Iḥya at-Turāth al-'Arabī; henceforth referred to as Ibn Mājah), *ḥadīth* no. 10. The *ḥadīth*, with some change in wording and with different chains, was also recorded by Aḥmad, *Musnad* (Beirut: Al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1398/1978; henceforth referred to as Aḥmad), vol. 4, p. 244, 248 and 252; Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, ed. by Muḥibb ad-Dīn Al-Khātīb and Muḥammad Fūwād 'Abdul-Bāqī (Al-Maṭba'ah as-Salafīyyah, 1400 A.H.; henceforth referred to as Al-Bukhārī), *ḥadīth* number 3640, 3641, 7311, 7312 and

One of the Muslim scholars who fulfilled that obligation was Imām Abū Ja'far Aḥmad Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Salāmah Al-Azdī Aṭ-Ṭaḥāwī, may Allah immerse him in His mercy. He lived during the third century after the Hijrah; he was born in 239 A.H. and died in 321 A.H. He reported what the Elders (Salaf) followed. He quoted from Imām Abū Ḥanīfah An-Nu'mān Ibn Thabit Al-Kūfī and his two colleagues, Abū Yūsuf Ya'qūb Ibn Ibrāhīm Al-Ḥimyarī Al-Anṣārī and Muḥammad Ibn Ḥassan Ash-Shaybānī, the principles of faith they believed in to please their Lord. May Allah bless them.

As time passed on, heresies and deviations - what their proponents (deceivingly) called *ta'wīl* ('correct interpretation') in order for it to be accepted - began to appear. Very few could distinguish between correct interpretation and wrong, deviant interpretations. *Ta'wīl*, as they understood it, was to discard the plain meaning of the text and understand it in a sense different from what its words implied, even though there was nothing in the words to suggest that meaning. This was a source of evil. Since they called it *ta'wīl*, and as people began using the term in that sense, it became difficult to distinguish correct interpretation from misinterpretation.

After that began, the Believers came to be in need of clear expositions and refutations of the misconceptions presented. This led to a lot of discussion and discord. The cause for that was the people's inclining to the misconceptions and doubts the heretics had raised and their entering into blameworthy philosophical discussions that the Elders had discouraged. The Elders prohibited studying, preoccupation with, or leaning towards such philosophy or scholasticism. This was in compliance with their Lord's command, Who said, "When you see men engaged in vain discourse about Our words, turn away from them unless they turn to a different topic." [6:68] The meaning of this verse clearly applies to them.

Misinterpretation of the text and deviation from the truth are of varying degrees: some are infidelity (*kufr*), some are intransigence (*fisq*), some are sin (*ma'ṣīyyah*) and some are simply mistakes (*kha't*).

It is necessary to follow the messengers strictly and adhere to what Allah revealed to them. Prophecy ended with Muḥammad (peace be on him). He was made the final prophet; his Book was

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elsewhere; At-Tirmidhī, 2192; Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, ed. by Muḥammad Muḥīy ad-Dīn 'Abdul-Ḥāmid (Beirut: Dār al-Iḥya as-Sunnah an-Nubuwīyyah/Dār at-Turāth al-'Arabī; henceforth referred to as Abū Dāwūd), *ḥadīth* no. 2484.

made the judge over all the books revealed before; he was given the Book and the Sunnah; and his message was for all responsible creatures – both men and jinns – for all times, until the Day of Resurrection. Through him, Allah has established the truth, explained everything people need, and completed his religion for him and his nation. He has declared that obedience to the Prophet is obedience to Allah and disobedience to the Prophet is disobedience to Allah. Furthermore, He swore by Himself that people will not be true Believers unless they submit to the Prophet's verdict on differences that may arise between them. He also stated that only hypocrites would ignore the Prophet and take their disputes to others for judgment. When they are called to Allah and the Messenger (to judge between them) – that is, to the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Messenger – they oppose it completely and claim that they simply want what is best and blessed.

And many of the dialecticians, philosophers and others say the same, "We want to know things as they really are. And we want to reconcile the rational evidence – what they call rational evidence which is actually ignorant evidence – and the reported statements from the Messenger." Or, "We want to bring the Shari'ah and philosophy into agreement."

Or as many of the heretics among the ascetics and Ṣūfīs say, "We want the best life by bringing together the Shari'ah and the falseness that they call reality." This is ignorance and misguidance. Similarly, many who have by any means grabbed power claim, "We want to improve the conditions of the people and reconcile their principles of government and the Shari'ah," and so on.

Whoever intends to establish anything in religion besides what the Prophet (peace be upon him) taught, and believes that it is good and that combines what the Prophet had with what contradicts it will only get the latter, for what the Prophet brought is sufficient and perfect. Every truth is part of it. Shortcomings and errors only come from the many Muslims themselves who actually do not know what the Prophet stated in matters related to theology, in matters related to different aspects of worship or in matters related to governmental affairs. Or they ascribe to the Shari'ah of the Messenger, because of their suppositions and customs, things that are not part of it and they discard many things which are part of that Shari'ah. As a result of the ignorance and error of some, and the intransigence and hypocrisy of others, the knowledge of the Prophet's teachings is on the decline and hypocrisy is on the rise.

It is necessary that we acquaint ourselves completely with what the Messenger (peace be on him) taught, reflect deeply on it and

apply it to all that we know and believe. We must apply it both exoterically and esoterically. In that way, we will do justice to the Book and will not discard anything of it.

If someone is not able to know or act upon all of that knowledge, he should not oppose what he cannot comprehend of what the Prophet (peace be upon him) brought. It is sufficient for him that he is not to be blamed for his inability. But he should be happy that someone else is able to do what he cannot. It should please him. He should wish that he could do the same. He should not believe in some parts of the revelation and not in others, but he must believe in all of the Book. He must also refrain from putting into it what does not belong to it, even if it be something passed on from earlier people or opinion, and refrain from following anything, in belief or actions, that is not from Allah. As Allah, the Most High, has said, "Do not confuse the truth with falsehood, nor hide the truth knowingly." [2:42]

This was the way of the earliest generation of Elders (Salaf), those who followed them in good, the leaders of the religion (*a'immat ad-dīn*) whom the entire Muslim nation accepts, and those who follow them until the Day of Resurrection. Abū Yūsuf, may Allah have mercy on him, said to Bishr Al-Mārisī, "Knowledge of *kalām* is ignorance, and ignorance of *kalām* is knowledge. Whoever masters *kalām* should be called or accused of being a heretic-hypocrite (*zindīq*)." By "ignorance of *kalām*" he meant the belief that it is not true, that it by itself is beneficial knowledge, or he meant by that refraining from *kalām* and avoiding studying it. That it will protect a person's knowledge and intellect and is part of knowledge itself. Allah knows best. He also said, "Whoever seeks knowledge through *kalām* becomes a heretic-hypocrite. Whoever seeks wealth by alchemy will become penniless. Whoever runs after lone (*gharīb*) *ḥadīth* falls into falsehood."

Imām Ash-Shāfi'ī (may Allah have mercy on him) said, "My judgment concerning the people engaged in *kalām* is that they should be flogged with palm branches and shoes and taken round and displayed before the tribes and clans." And he stated, "This is the punishment for those who ignore the Qur'ān and Sunnah and instead engage in *kalām*." He also stated, in lines of poetry, "Every knowledge except the Qur'ān is diversion except (also) *ḥadīth* and *fiqh* in religion. Knowledge is found there. What He related to us is stated; beyond that is only what has been whispered by Satan." What the companions (of Ash-Shāfi'ī) mentioned in their legal rulings, he would advise the scholars of his land, "Do not let the

scholastic theologians (*mutakillimūn*) be among you." The Elders said that if a man willed to have his books left as a religious endowment, the books of *kalām* among his books should be sold (and not kept as part of the religious endowment). That has been stated in *Al-Fatāwa adh-Dhahirīyyah*.

How can one wish to attain the knowledge of the foundations or principle aspects without following what the Messenger brought? What an excellent statement was made by the one who said in poetry, "You who go out in search of knowledge, all knowledge is subservient to the knowledge of the Messenger. Do you seek the fine details to correct the foundation, and you have forgotten the foundation of the foundations?"

The Prophet was given full control over language. He knew how to begin a speech, how to conclude it, and how to put many ideas in few words. He was sent with general principles and the knowledge of the matters of this world as well as the next. Later it happened that whenever anyone came with an innovation, people took it and wrote volumes to respond to it, although such deeds contain few blessings. The Elders, on the other hand, used to speak and write little, but what they said was very useful and full of blessings. It is not as the straying scholastic theologians say, "The method of those people was safer but ours is wiser and more erudite." Or as those who have no ability to reflect in matters of *fiqh*, "(the Elders) did not formulate or define the principles, as they were busy with other matters. We devoted ourselves to these things so we are more knowledgeable than they."

All those people are ignorant of the greatness of the Elders and their profound knowledge, deep insight and unassuming style. By Allah, the later writers only distinguished themselves by writing on marginal issues, whereas the Elders were concerned with the fundamentals. They laid down the basic rules, defined the principles and were interested in major issues and problems of real importance. The later writers were concerned about one thing while the Elders were concerned with something completely different. And Allah has decreed for everything its measure.

Many scholars have commented on this creed, but I have noticed that these commentators have inclined to the way of the unacceptable *kalām*, based their arguments upon them and spoken according to their terms.

The Elders did not disapprove of new terms like substance, body, accident, and so on, just because they were new terms trying to convey true ideas. In fact, they never objected to the terms which the new sciences employed. Nor did they oppose any effort to

establish the truth and refute the objections which heretics and non-Muslims raised. They disapproved only of those new terms which conveyed wrong ideas opposed to the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. This is why the exponents of these (heretical) ideas lack the conviction which an ordinary Muslim has, not to speak of the scholars among the Elders.

Since their premises contained both truth and untruth, differences arose and controversies multiplied, and ideas conflicting with the authentic Shari'ah and clear reason were put forward. This is not the place to enter into such a discussion; we will discuss the matter further while commenting on the author's words, "Whoever seeks knowledge that has been withheld from him..."

I desired to comment on it following the way of the Elders. I have benefited from their writings and built upon their ideas. I hope to be counted among their followers and to be resurrected with them in the Hereafter, "...with those upon whom is the grace of Allah: the prophets, the sincere lovers of truth, the witnesses thereto, and the righteous – what a beautiful fellowship!" [4:49]

Since people do not like lengthy expositions, I have tried to be brief in my comments. "My success in the task can only come from Allah; in Him I trust and unto Him I turn" [11:88], and, "He is sufficient for us; and what a good disposer of affairs." [3:173]

THE CREED OF AṬ-ṬAḤĀWĪ

(1) We say about the Unity of Allah - with Allah's help - that Allah is one, without any partners.

(2) There is nothing like Him.

(3) Nothing is impossible for Him.

(4) There is no god other than He.

(5) He is Eternal without a beginning, Everlasting without an end.

(6) He does not perish (*yafnā*) or pass away (*yabīd*).

(7) Nothing comes into being except what He wills.

(8) No imagination (*wahm*) can conceive of Him, and no understanding (*fahm*) can fathom Him.

(9) He does not resemble mankind.

(10) He is Living and will never die. He is All-Sustaining and never sleeps.

(11) He creates without being in need to do so, and provides for His creation without any trouble (*bilā mu'unah*).

(12) He causes death without fear, and He resurrects (the dead) with no effort.

(13) He has always existed with His attributes, even before the creation of the world, which did not add anything to His attributes that were not already present. Just as He is Eternal along with His attributes, so He is Everlasting along with them.

(14) It is not the case that He acquired the name Creator (Al-Khāliq) only after He created, or the name Originator (Al-Bārī) only after He originated (something).

(15) He was qualified with Lordship (*rubūbīyyah*) even when there was nothing to lord over. And He was the Creator even when there was nothing created.

(16) In the same way that He is the "Reviver of life to the Dead", after He has given them life a first time, He deserves this name before bringing them to life; so, too, He deserves the name Creator before He actually created them.

(17) This is because He has power over all things (*kulli shayy*). All things depend on Him and are easy for Him. He is not in need of anything. Nothing is like Him. He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing.

(18) He created (*khalaqa*) the creation (*khālq*) with His Knowledge (*bi-'ilmihi*).

(19) He has ordained all things in due measure.

(20) He has fixed their terms.

(21) Nothing about them was hidden from Him before He created them. And He knew everything they would do before He created them.

(22) He has commanded them to obey Him and He has forbidden them to disobey Him.

(23) Things occur as He ordains and wills them. His will is always carried out. There is no will for His servants except for what He wills for them. Whatever He wills for them happens and what He does not will for them does not happen.

(24) He gives guidance to whomever He wills, protects them and keeps them safe from harm as an act of grace. And He leads astray whomever He wills, abases them and afflicts them out of His justice.

(25) All of them are subject to His will, between either His grace or His justice.

(26) He is exalted above having opponents (*aḍād*) or equals (*andād*).

(27) His decision is never reversed; His command is never resisted; His will is never frustrated.

(28) We believe in all of these things, and We are certain that everything comes from Him.

(29) (And we believe and are certain) that Muḥammad is His chosen Servant (*'abd*), His elect Prophet (*nabī*) and His Messenger (*rasūl*), with whom He is well-pleased.

(30) And he is the seal of the prophets.

(31) He is Leader (*imām*) of the Pious.

(32) He is Chief of the Messengers.

(33) He is very dear to the Lord of the Worlds.

(34) All claims to prophecy after him are false (*ghayy*) and fanciful (*hawa*).

(35) He has been sent to all jinns and all mankind with truth, guidance, light and illumination.

(36) The Qur'ān is the word of Allah.

(37) Anyone who attributes something human to Allah is an infidel.

(38) The seeing of Allah by the people of Paradise is factual, without their vision being all-encompassing and without the manner of their vision being known.

(39) The foundation of Islam is not made firm except with the support of unreserved assent and submission to Allah.

(40) He Who seeks knowledge that has been barred from him, and whose intellect is not prepared to surrender, will be veiled from a pure understanding of Allah's unity, clear knowledge and correct faith.

(41) He sways (*yatadhabdhab*) between faith and disbelief, confirmation and denial, and acceptance and rejection. He will be

subject to vain suggestions, perplexed and lost, neither a sincere Believer nor an open denier.

(42) The belief of a person in the seeing of Allah by the people of Paradise is not correct if that person tries to imagine what it is like or if he tries to interpret it according to his own understanding, since the interpretation of this seeing or the meaning of any of the subtle phenomena which are in the realm of Lordship, is by avoiding its interpretation and strictly adhering to submission. This is the faith of Islam. Those who do not refrain from negating Allah's attributes or conceiving them on human patterns are surely mistaken, they are unable to glorify Allah properly.

(43) Those who do not refrain from *nafī* (negating the attributes of Allah) and *tashbiḥ* (imagining Allah's attributes to be like human attributes) go astray and fail to glorify Allah properly.

(44) For our Lord is qualified with the attributes (*ṣifāt*) of uniqueness (*waḥdānīyyah*) and the characteristics (*nu'ūt*) of absolute singularity (*fardānīyyah*). No created being shares with Him these attributes.

(45) Allah is supremely exalted from definition of Him or from being restricted, or from needing any parts, limbs or instruments. He is not bound by the six directions of space as all created beings are.

(46) The ascension (*mi'rāj*) of the Prophet (peace be on him) is a fact. He was taken in person for a journey by night, and lifted awake and in body to the heavens, and from there to such heights as Allah pleased. Allah showered upon him His favors as He pleased and revealed to him what He liked. His heart did not falsify what his eyes saw. Blessed is he in this life and in the Hereafter.

(47) *Al-Ḥawḍ* (the Fountain), which Allah will grant the Prophet (peace be upon him) as an honor to quench the thirst of his nation, is factual.

(48) *Ash-Shifā'ah* (intercession) that has been prepared on their (the Muslims') behalf is also a fact, as has been reported in the aḥādīth.

(49) The covenant that Allah made with Adam and his descendants is a fact.

(50) Allah knows from eternity and knows in an instant the number of people who will go to Paradise and the number that will go to Hell. They will neither be increased or decreased (from what He knows). Similarly, He knows the acts which anyone will do.

(51) Everyone is eased to what he was created for, and it is the action with which a man's life is sealed which dictates his fate. Those who are fortunate are fortunate by the decree of Allah. Likewise, those who are wretched are wretched by the decree of Allah.

(52) The exact nature of Allah's decree is Allah's secret in His creation. Neither any angel near the Throne nor any sent messenger has been given any knowledge of it. To delve into it or reflect too much about it only leads to destruction and loss, and results in rebelliousness. One should take every precaution concerning such investigation, thought, and allowing of doubts to appear. Verily, Allah has withheld the knowledge of qadr from His creatures and He has prohibited them from seeking it. Allah says in His Book, "He is not questioned for His acts, but they are questioned" [21:23]. Therefore, if one asks, why He did that, he has rejected the command of the Book, and whoever rejects the command of the Book becomes an infidel.

(53) This is all that people with enlightened hearts need to know, people who are devoted servants of Allah, and constitutes the degree of those firmly grounded in knowledge. Verily, knowledge is of two types: one existent (or accessible) in creation and one inaccessible in creation. To deny the knowledge that is existent is infidelity; to claim the knowledge that is inaccessible is also infidelity. Faith is not confirmed until a person accepts the knowledge that is existent and abandons seeking the knowledge which is inaccessible.

(54) We believe in the Pen, the Tablet and all that is written on it.

(55) If all creation gathered together to prevent something that Allah has decreed will occur, they would not be able to prevent it. And if they all gathered together to have something done that Allah has decreed will not occur, they would not be able to do it. The Pen has finished writing whatever will occur until the Last Day.

(56) What has missed someone was not to befall him, and what has befallen him was not to miss him.

(57) Everyone must know that Allah already knows everything that is going to happen in His creation and has fixed their measures definitively and irrevocably. There is nothing He has created in either the heavens or the earth that can contradict it, add to it, erase it, change it, decrease or increase it in any way.

(58) This is a fundamental aspect of faith, a necessary aspect of knowledge and of our realizing Allah's Oneness and Lordship. As Allah has said, "He created all things and ordained them in due measures" [25:2]; and, "Allah's command is always a decided decree" [33:38].

(59) So woe to those who quarrel about fore-ordainment, who delve into it with a diseased heart, trying to unravel its profound mysteries through delusions, and who land themselves deep in sin by their baseless, lying conjectures.

(60) The Throne and the Footstool are realities.

(61) Allah is not in need of the Throne and what is beneath it. He encompasses all and is above everything. His creation is not able to encompass Him.

(62) We say with faith, affirmation and submission that Allah took Abraham as an intimate friend and that He spoke directly to Moses.

(63) We believe in the angels, the prophets and the books that were sent down to the messengers. We bear witness that they were all following the path of manifest truth.

(64) As for all those who face our *qiblah* (*ahl qiblatinā*), we call them *muslim* and *mu'min*, so long as they profess what the Prophet (peace be upon him) taught, and believe in whatever he said or enjoined.

(65) We neither enter into vain talk about Allah nor do we dispute obstinately on the matters of His religion.

(66) We do not dispute about the Qur'ān. We bear witness that it is the speech of the Lord of the Worlds, which the faithful spirit brought down and communicated to Muḥammad, the leader of the messengers (may Allah's blessings be upon him and all of his

family). It is the speech of Allah, the Most High, which no speech of any created being can match. We do not believe that it was created, and we avoid going against the belief of the Muslim community.

(67) We do not charge anyone of the *ahl al-qiblah* with being an infidel (*kāfir*) for committing a sin, unless he considers it to be lawful. Nor do we say that sin will not harm the sinner merely because he has faith.

(68) We hope that the righteous among the Believers will receive Allah's pardon and be sent to Paradise through His mercy, but we cannot be certain about them. We cannot testify that they will certainly go to Paradise. As for wrongdoers, we pray to Allah to forgive them. Although we do fear for them, we are not in despair for them.

(69) Anyone who feels secure (from Allah's punishment) or who loses hope (in His mercy) falls outside the realm of Islam. The correct course for the *ahl al-qiblah* lies in between these two ways.

(70) One does not leave the realm of *īmān* except by repudiating what brought him into it.

(71) *Īmān* (faith) is to profess with the tongue and believe in the heart that all that the Prophet (peace be on him) is authentically known to have said or enjoined is true. Imān is one, and with regard to its essence all Believers are equal. They differ only with respect to their fear of Allah and piety, abstention from following evil desires and pursuance of what is best.

(72) All Believers are friends (*awliyā'*) of Allah, the All-Merciful.

(73) the most honored of them (the Believers) in the sight of Allah are those who obey Him most and follow the Qur'ān best.

(74) *Īmān* is faith in Allah, His angels, His books, His messengers, the Last Day, and that everything, good and bad, pleasant and unpleasant, is ordained by Allah.

(75) We believe in all these things. We never discriminate between one messenger and another. We also believe that whatever they have taught is true.

(76) Those of the *ummah* of Muḥammad, peace be upon him, who commit grave sins (*kabā'ir*) will not stay in Hell forever, even if they do not repent, provided they die while Believers in Allah's unity and meet Allah knowing Him. They will be absolutely at His will and judgment. He may forgive and pardon them out of His mercy if He wills, as He has said in His book, "And He will forgive anything other than it (*shirk*) to whom He please" [4:48]. Or He may punish them in the Fire, as is required by His justice, and then, out of pity and the intercession of His obedient servants, take them out thereof and put them in His Paradise. This is because Allah is the Protector and Patron of those who know Him. He never treats them in either of the two worlds like those who deny Him and who are bereft of His guidance and have failed to obtain His protection. O Allah, Protector of Islam and the Muslims! Keep us in Islam until we meet You.

(77) We believe that prayer may be offered behind any person from among the *ahl al-qiblah*, whether he is righteous or impious. We also believe in performing the funeral prayer over them upon their deaths.

(78) We do not "place" any one of them in Paradise or in Hell.

(79) Nor do we charge anyone with not having faith (*kufr*) or *shirk* or hypocrisy (*nifāq*), as long as they do not openly demonstrate anything of that nature. We leave what they believe or do in private to Allah.

(80) We do not believe in taking up the sword against any of the *ummah* of Muḥammad, peace be upon him, except upon those for whom it is obligatory.

(81) We do not believe in revolt against our leaders and rulers, even if they commit injustice, nor do we pray against them or defy their orders. On the contrary, we believe that obedience to them is a duty and a part of our obedience to Allah, so long as they do not order anything sinful. We pray for their safety and piety.

(82) We follow the Sunnah and the *jamā'ah*, and avoid disagreement, dissension and sectarianism.

(83) We love those who are just and the honest, and we hate those who are unjust and dishonest.

(84) Whenever something is not clear to us we say Allah knows better.

(85) We believe that it is correct to wipe over leather socks, whether one is traveling or resident, as has been mentioned in the *ḥadīth*.

(86) *Ḥajj* and *jihād* will continue until the Last Day under all Muslim authorities (*ulī al-amr*), pious or impious. They will never be suspended or abrogated.

(87) We believe in the honorable angels that note down (our deeds). Allah has appointed them to keep watch over us.

(88) We believe in the Angel of Death, who has been charged with taking out the souls of the people.

(89) We believe that some people may be punished in their graves if they deserve it, and that Munkar and Nakīr will question people about their Lord, their religion and their Prophet, as has been reported by the Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) and the Companions. We believe that the grave is either a garden of Paradise or a pit of the Hell-fire.

(90) We believe in resurrection after death and in recompense of deeds on the Day of Judgment. People will be have their deeds presented and will be accountable for them. They will be given their records to read, and will be rewarded or punished. (We also believe) in the Bridge (*ṣirāṭ*) and the Balance (*mizān*).

(91) Paradise and Hell have been created and will never perish or pass away. Allah created them before the world. He allotted some people for each. Those whom He allotted for Paradise, He did so out of His bounty for them. And those whom He allotted for Hell, He allotted because it was required by His justice. Everyone will do what has been chosen for him, and will go to the place for which he has been created. Good and evil both have been determined for each and every person.

(92) The power needed to perform a duty is a gift from Allah, not an attribute possessed by man, and exists only with the action.

However, power in the sense of health, potential, ability and fitness of the organs is prior to action and is the basis of obligation. "Allah does not place on any person a burden greater than he can bear" [2:286].

(93) Human actions are created by Allah, although they are acquired by man.

(94) Allah does not impose actions upon human beings except what they can do, and they are only able to do what He has imposed upon them. This is the meaning of the Prophet's words, "There is no power and no strength save in Allah." We believe that no one can do anything or move anything, or abstain from any sin except with the help of Allah, nor can anyone obey His command and persevere in obedience except by His grace. Everything happens according to His will, knowledge, decree and planning. His will rules over all wills and His decree prevails over all planning. He does what He pleases and He never commits injustice. "He is not to be questioned for His acts, but they will be questioned (for theirs)" [21:23].

(95) We believe that the dead benefit from the prayers and charities offered by the living on their behalf.

(96) Allah answers prayers and fulfills needs.

(97) He controls everything, and nothing controls Him. Without Him nothing can survive for an instant. Whoever turns away from Him, even for the blinking of an eye, is ungrateful and courts His doom (*ḥayn*).

(98) Allah becomes angry and pleased, but not like any created being.

(99) We love all the Companions of the Prophet (peace be on him), but we do not love any one of them to excess, nor do we disown any of them. We hate those who hate them or speak ill of them. We always mention them in positive terms, and believe that to love them is part of the religion, part of *īmān* and *iḥsān*; and that to hate them is infidelity, hypocrisy and transgression.

(100) We affirm that, after the Prophet (peace be on him), the first rightful heir to the *khilāfah* was Abū Bakr, on the grounds that he was the best and the most eminent of all the *ummah*.

(101) The second heir to the *khilāfah* was 'Umar, may Allah be pleased with him.

(102) The third heir to the *khilāfah* was 'Uthmān, may Allah be pleased with him.

(103) The fourth heir to the *khilāfah* was 'Alī, may Allah be pleased with him.

(104) They are the right-principled caliphs and the rightly guided imāms.

(105) We believe that the ten Companions, those whom the Prophet (peace be on him) named and gave the glad tidings that they would go to Paradise, will go to Paradise, as he said, and what he said is true. Those Companions are: Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān, 'Alī, Talḥah, Az-Zubayr, Sa'd, Sa'īd, 'Abdur-Raḥmān Ibn 'Awf and Abū 'Ubaydah Ibn Al-Jarrāḥ, "the trustee of this *ummah*". May Allah be pleased with them all.

(106) Whoever speaks well of the Prophet's Companions, his pure and pious wives - free from any impurity - and his noble and righteous descendants - free from any impurity - is free from hypocrisy.

(107) The scholars of the Elders and their successors, whether they are *ḥadīth* and tradition scholars or scholars of *fiqh* and rational sciences, should not be mentioned except in good terms. Whoever speaks ill of them is not on the right path.

(108) We do not exalt any friend (*walī*) of Allah over any one of His prophets, peace and blessings be upon them. On the contrary, we believe that a single prophet (*nabī*) is greater than all the walis combined.

(109) We believe in the miracles (*karamāt*) that have proceeded from them and have been reported by reliable reporters.

(110) We believe in the signs of the Hour, such as the emergence of the Great Liar (*ad-Dajjāl*), the descent of Jesus son of Mary from Heaven, and we believe in the rising of the sun from the west, and the appearance of the Beast of the Earth from its place.

(111) We do not believe in diviners and fortune-tellers, nor do we believe in those who expound ideas incompatible with the Qur'ān, the Sunnah and the consensus of the *ummah*.

(112) We believe that keeping together (*jamā'ah*) is the true and correct path, and that disunity leads to deviation and torment.

(113) the religion of Allah in the heavens and on the earth is one, and it is the dīn of Islam. Allah has said, "Verily the religion before Allah is Islam" [5:3]; and, "(Allah) has chosen for you as your religion Islam" [5:3]. Islam steers a course between excess and negligence, between anthropomorphism and negation, between coercionism and libertarianism, between complacency and despair.

(114) This is our faith and our religion in form and spirit. We have nothing to do with those who differ from what we have said and elaborated. We pray to Allah that He may confirm us in faith, let us die upon it, save us from erroneous ideas and heretical doctrines such as those advanced by the anthropomorphists (*mushabbihah*), Mu'tazilah, Jahmīyyah, determinists (*jabarīyyah*), free-willers (*qadarīyyah*), and others who have differed from the Ahl as-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah and fallen into error. We have nothing to do with them. In our view, they are astray in their thinking and wrongdoers. And to Allah we turn for guidance and safety.

The *Creed* and its Commentary

(1) We say about the Unity of Allah – with Allah's help – that Allah is one, without any partners.

One must know that *tawḥīd* is the first matter the prophets preached. It is the first step on the path and the first stage of the journey to Allah. Allah stated, "We sent Noah to his people and he said, 'My people, serve Allah; you have no other god than He" [7:59]. Hūd said similar words to his people, "Serve Allah, there is no god for you but He" [7:65]. Ṣāliḥ said to his people, "Worship Allah as you have no god but He" [7:73]. Shu'ayb said to his people, "Worship Allah; you have no god but He" [7:85]. Allah also says, "We sent to every community a prophet saying, 'Worship Allah and avoid false gods" [16:36], and, "Not a messenger did We send before you (Muḥammad) without Our revealing to him that there is no god but I, so worship and serve Me" [21:25]. The Prophet (peace be on him) also stated, "I have been commanded to fight people until they accept that there is no god but Allah and that Muḥammad is His prophet."[1]

Therefore, it is correct to say that the first obligation upon a person is to witness that there is no god except Allah. He is not required to reflect, to intend to reflect or to be skeptical at first, as the leaders of the censured *kalām* have stated. In fact, all the leaders of the Elders agree that the first thing one must do is witness to the unity of Allah and the prophethood of Muḥammad (peace be on him). They also agree that if a child did that before he reached the age of puberty, he is not commanded to repeat the witnessing after attaining puberty. Instead, he is commanded to ritually purify himself and pray when he reaches puberty or is able to ascertain things, according to those who hold this latter opinion. None of them requires his guardian to address him at that time and tell him to repeat his act of witnessing to the faith, even though that is the first duty of a Muslim and a necessary condition for performing the prayer. But he, in fact, has already fulfilled that obligation.

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[1]Al-Bukhārī, 25; Muslim, 22; At-Tirmidhī, 2606; Abū Dāwūd, 2640; An-Nasā'ī, *Sunan* (with commentary by Jalāl ad-Dīn As-Suyūṭī and gloss by As-Sindī; Beirut: Dār Iḥyā at-Turāth al-Islāmī, 1384/1930; henceforth referred to as An-Nasā'ī), Chapter Zakāh, vol. 5, p. 14.

The jurists have also discussed the case of the person who prays but has not made the testimony of faith (the two *shahādahs*) or performs some aspect of Islam without the testimony. Is such a person a Muslim? The correct opinion is that he becomes a Muslim by fulfilling all the deeds that are particular to Islam.

With *tawḥīd* one enters into Islam, and with it one will depart from this world. The Prophet (peace be on him) said, "He whose last words are 'There is no god except Allah,' will enter Paradise."[2] It is, therefore, the first duty and the last duty.

tawḥīd is, then, the beginning of the matter and its end. What is meant by this is *tawḥīd al-ilāhīyyah*, or the belief in the unity of God (as the only object of worship). For *tawḥīd* has three dimensions to it: first, matters concerning the attributes of Allah; second, *tawḥīd ar-rubūbīyyah* (the oneness of His Lordship), which states that Allah alone created everything; and third, *tawḥīd al-ilāhīyyah* or the oneness of His Godhead, that Allah alone is to be worshiped and served without associating any partner to Him.

The first category of *tawḥīd* concerns the attributes of Allah. Those who deny the attributes include the denial of attributes as part of what they call *tawḥīd*. Jahm Ibn Ṣafwān and those who agree with him say that affirming the attributes requires more than one necessary being. Such a statement is known to be obviously and blatantly wrong, for a being devoid of all attributes cannot have a real existence. It is an impossibility, a mere fancy of mind, an absolute void. This view of *tawḥīd* led some people to the doctrine of incarnation (*ḥulūl*) and union (*ittiḥād*), which is far worse than the heresy of the Christians. The Christians at least limit the divinity to Christ, while these people extend it to all of creation.

A number of evil consequences follow from this false understanding of *tawḥīd*. For example, Pharaoh and his followers become perfect Believers and the best gnostics of the truth of Allah. The idol worshipers are also considered correct and faithful since they were actually worshiping Allah and no one else. Similarly, there is no longer any difference between the lawful and the unlawful, between (marrying or having intercourse with) a mother or sister and a non-related woman; there is no difference between water and alcohol nor between adultery and marriage. They are all from one and the same essence. In fact, they are all one and the

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[2]Abū Dāwūd, 3116; Aḥmad, 5:223, 247; Ibn Ḥibban, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, ed. by 'Abdur-Raḥmān Muḥammad 'Uthmān and Muḥammad 'Abdul-Muḥsin Al-Kutubī (Madinah: Al-Maktab as-Salafīyyah, 1390/1970; henceforth referred to as Ibn Ḥibban), *ḥadīth* no. 719.

same Being. This doctrine also finds fault with the prophets, since they curtailed the freedom of the people and made things difficult for them. Exalted is Allah high above what they say.

The second category of *tawḥīd*, *tawḥīd ar-rubūbīyyah*, is to believe that He alone is the Creator of everything. There are not two creators equal in attributes and actions. This *tawḥīd* is definitely true without any doubt. It is the goal (or final belief) of many philosophers, theologians, and some Ṣūfis. No known people have ever denied the truthfulness of this kind of *tawḥīd*. In fact, hearts have an inherent tendency to believe in it, more so than for any other truth or existence. The messengers, as Allah mentions, questioned their people about this belief in the following manner, "Is there any doubt about the existence of Allah, the Originator of the Heavens and the Earth?" [14:10]

The person most famous for claiming his ignorance or rejection of the existence of the Creator was Pharaoh. But in his inner soul, he was actually sure of it. Moses said to him, "You do know that none but the Lord of the heavens and the earth has sent down these [signs] as eye-openers" [17:102]. And Allah stated the following about Pharaoh and his people, "Their hearts were convinced of it, but they denied it arrogantly and unjustly" [27:14]. That is why, when Pharaoh said, "'Who is the Lord of the Worlds?'" as if rejecting it, he was actually aware of Him, so Moses said to him, "'(He is) the Lord and Cherisher of the Heavens and the Earth and all that is between them, if you want to believe.' (Thereupon Pharaoh) said to those around him, 'Do you hear what he says?' (Moses) said, '(He is) your Lord and the Lord of your fathers and your forefathers.' (Pharaoh) said, 'Your messenger who has been sent to you is certainly crazed.' (Moses) said, 'Lord of the East and the West and all in between, if you want to understand.'" [26:24-28]

Some people claim that Pharaoh asked Moses about the nature of Allah and since one cannot talk about His nature, Moses could not answer his question. This is wrong. Pharaoh did not put the question to Moses to elicit any information about God, but only to deny His existence. The other verses of the Qur'ān show that Pharaoh was denying or refusing to admit God's existence. It is not true that he confessed to God's existence and only wanted to know more about Him. This is why Moses, in his answer, assumed that God was known to him and he did not try to prove His existence, as the signs of God's existence and the proofs of His Lordship are so obvious that no one would ask about who He is. His existence is too well-known, clear and obvious for anyone to be ignorant of Him. The knowledge of His existence is inherent in man more than any other truth.

We know of no people who have ever said that there are two creators of the world equal in attributes and actions. Even the dualist Magians and Manichaeists, who affirm two principles, light and darkness and believe that the world has proceeded from them, agree that light is better than darkness; it is the praiseworthy god, while darkness is evil. They dispute over whether darkness is eternal or contingent. Therefore, they do not affirm two equal lords.

As for the Christians, who believe in the Trinity, they do not affirm three separate lords for the world. Rather, they agree that the creator of the world is one and they say, "In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost" as one God. But this belief in the triune God is self-contradictory, and their belief in incarnation is even worse. That is why they have great differences regarding its interpretation. No one has been able to produce an intelligible view, and no two views agree with each other. They believe that He is one as essence, three as hypostases; but then they differ about the nature of the hypostases. Some conceive them as properties, others as qualities, and still others as persons. Every human being knows in the light of his natural reason that this is false. In any case, they do not say that there are two Creators similar to one another.

The point here is that there have never been any people who have affirmed the existence of two equal creators. In spite of all that, many theologians and philosophers have tired themselves out trying to prove the fact that there is only one Creator. Some of them have admitted that it cannot be proven by rational argument and claim that it is something that is known only through revelation.

The most common argument they advance is known as the argument of exclusion. This argument runs like this. If there were two creators and they disagreed about something, such as one wanted to move X, whereas the other did not want it to be moved, or one wanted to make Y a living being, whereas the other wanted to make it lifeless, then, logically speaking, there are only three possibilities. First, the wills of the two are both carried out; second, only the will of one of them is carried out; third, the will of neither of them is carried out. The first case is not possible because it requires the existence of contraries. The third possibility is also ruled out because it would imply that a body is neither moving nor not moving and this is impossible. This would also imply that both of them are incapable of carrying out their wills, which would disqualify them from being God. Finally, if the will of one is realized and not that of the other, he alone will deserve to be God and the one whose will is not realized cannot be considered God. For a fuller treatment of this argument, one may consult the relevant books.

Many people think that this argument is implied in the verse, "Had there been gods other than Allah, the Heavens and the Earth would have collapsed" [21:22]. The cause of their misunderstanding is their belief that the unity of lordship (*tawḥīd ar-rubūbīyyah*) which they try to prove is the same as the unity of Godhead (*tawḥīd al-ilāhīyyah*) which the Qur'ān states and which the prophets preached. But this is not so. The *tawḥīd* which the prophets preached and which their books teach is the *tawḥīd al-ilāhīyyah*, which encompasses or includes the *tawḥīd ar-rubūbīyyah*. It means to worship and to serve Allah without ascribing any partner to Him. The Arab polytheists and pagans affirmed the notion of *tawḥīd ar-rubūbīyyah* and that the Creator of the heavens and the earth is one. Allah states about them, "If you ask them who created the heavens and the earth, they will say, 'Allah'" [31:25], and "Say (to them): To whom does the earth and all upon it belong, if you truly know? They will say, 'To Allah.' Say (to them then): Will you not then receive admonition?" [23:84-85]. There are many verses of this nature in the Qur'ān.

They did not believe about their idols that they participated with Allah in the creation of the world. Their beliefs were the same as those of the other polytheists of the world, the Indians, Turks, Berbers and others. Sometimes they believed that their idols represented some pious men, prophets or saints who would intercede for them with Allah and bring them closer to Allah. This was the root of the polytheism of the Arabs. In talking about the people of Noah, Allah states, "They said: 'Do not abandon your gods; abandon not Wadd, nor Suwa's, nor Yaghuth, nor Ya'uq, nor Naṣr" [71:23]. It is confirmed in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Al-Bukhārī, the books of Qur'ānic commentary, narratives of the prophets and elsewhere, from Ibn 'Abbās and other Elders, that those were the names of some pious people among the people of Noah. When they died, the people gathered over their graves, then put up their statues and after a period of time they began to worship them. And these particular idols were passed on to the Arab tribes. Ibn 'Abbās mentions where they went to tribe by tribe.[3]

It is confirmed in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* on the authority of Abū Al-Hayyāj Al-Asadī that 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib said to him, "Shall I send you on a mission like the mission the Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) sent me on? He commanded me not to leave any elevated

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[3]Al-Bukhārī, *Tafsīr*, 4920; Jawwād 'Alī, *Tārīkh al-'Arab qabl al-Islām* (Beirut: Dār Al-Malāyīn and Baghdad: Maktabat an-Nahḍah, 1976), vol. VI, pp. 227-235.

grave but to raze it to the ground, and not to leave any idol except to demolish it."[4]

In the *Ṣaḥīḥ*s of Al-Bukhārī and Muslim it is also recorded that the Prophet (peace be on him) said during his fatal illness, "May Allah curse the Jews and Christians who took the grave sites of their prophets as places of worship." He was warning against what they had done. Commenting on this *ḥadīth*, 'Ā'ishah said, "If the Prophet had not warned us against this, his grave would have been elevated, but he abhorred that his grave should be made a place of worship."[5]

In the *Ṣaḥīḥ*s of Al-Bukhārī and Muslim it is also recorded that while on his deathbed, someone mentioned to the Prophet (peace be on him) some church in Abyssinia and described its beauty and icons. He (peace be on him) said, "Whenever a pious person died in their community they erected a church on his grave and decorated it with icons. They will be the worst people in Allah's sight on the Day of Judgment."[6]

In *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* it is recorded that the Prophet (peace be on him) stated, some five days before he died, "Beware! The people before you used to make the graves of their prophets and pious people a worshiping ground. Beware! Do not make graves into mosques. I strictly forbid you to do so."[7]

Another cause of *shirk* (associating partners with Allah) is the worship of the stars. People build idols symbolizing their properties and then worship them. It is said that the *shirk* of the people of Abraham was of this nature. Similarly, there is associating partners with Allah by (taking) angels and jinns (as Allah's partners) and using idols to worship them.

Such people affirmed the existence of the Creator and did not claim that there were two creators for this world. But they took these idols as intermediaries to intercede for them. Allah Himself said about such people, "Those who take as protectors other than Allah say that they only worship them in order that they might bring them

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[4]Muslim, *Janā'iz*, 969; Abū Dāwūd, *Janā'iz*, 3218; At-Tirmidhī, *Janā'iz*, 1049; An-Nasā'ī, *Janā'iz*, 4:88, 89; Aḥmad, 1: 96, 129.

[5]Al-Bukhārī, 1330, 1390; Muslim, *Masājid,* 529; Abū Dāwūd, *Janā'iz*, 3227; An-Nasā'ī, 4:95-96; Aḥmad 6:80, 121, 146, 252.

[6]Al-Bukhārī, 427, 434; Muslim, *Masājid,* 528; An-Nasā'ī, *Masājid,* 2:41-42; Aḥmad, 6:51.

[7]Muslim, *Masājid,* 532; Aṭ-Ṭabarānī, *Al-Mu'jam al-Kabīr*, ed. by 'Abdul-Hāmid As-Salafī (Baghdad: Iḥyā li at-Turāth al-Islāmī and Dār al-'Arabīyyah, first edition, 1398/1978; henceforth referred to as At-Ṭabarānī, *Al-Kabīr* ḥadīth no. 1686.

nearer to God" [39:3]. He also says, "They serve besides Allah things that neither hurt them nor profit them and say: 'These are our intercessors with Allah.' Say: Do you indeed inform Allah of something He knows not in the heavens or on earth? Glory to Him, and far is He above the partners they ascribe to Him" [10:18].

Similar was the case with the previous polytheistic nations who denied the messengers. Concerning the story of Ṣāliḥ, Allah states that the nine groups of people swore by Allah that they would attack Ṣāliḥ and his family at night. Those evil-doing polytheists swore by Allah that they would kill their prophet and his family, thus establishing that they believed in Allah – (but a belief in the manner) of polytheists.

It is clear, therefore, that the *tawḥīd* which is desired or which is the goal is *tawḥīd al-ilāhīyyah*,which encompasses and includes *tawḥīd ar-rubūbīyyah*. Allah has stated, "Therefore turn your face resolutely toward the Faith, the handiwork of Allah, on whose pattern He created mankind. (There can be) no changing the creation brought about by Allah. This is the Way of life, straight and upright. Yet most people do not know. Turn back in repentance to Him and fear Him. Establish regular prayers and be not among those who join gods with Allah, Who split up their religion and become mere sects – each party rejoicing in what is with itself. When trouble touches men, they cry to their Lord, turning back to Him in repentance. But when He gives them a taste of mercy as from Himself, behold, some of them pay part worship to other gods besides their Lord, as if to show their ingratitude for the favors We have bestowed on them. Then enjoy (your brief day). Soon will you know your folly. Have We sent down an authority to them which calls upon them to set up associates (with God)? When We give the people a taste of mercy they rejoice in it; but when adversity strikes them due to the consequences of their deeds, then they fall into despair" [30:30-36]. Allah also says, "Is there any doubt about the existence of Allah, the Originator of the Heavens and the Earth?" [14:10]

The Prophet (peace be on him) said, "Every child is born with *fiṭrah* (the natural way, the religion of Islam). Thereafter, his parents make him a Jew or a Christian or a Magian."[8] This *ḥadīth* does not mean that a child is born like a clean slate, completely unaware of *tawḥīd* or *shirk*, as some people say. The verses above negate this claim (as they show that the natural religion that the child is born

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[8]Al-Bukhārī, 1358, 1359; Muslim, *Al-Qadr*, 2658; Aḥmad, 2:233, 275, 393, 410, 481; At-Tirmidhī, 2138.

with is Islam). Furthermore, the Prophet (peace be on him) narrated from Allah, "I created My servants with a mind to serve none but Me. Thereafter, the devils grab them...."[9] The same idea is alluded to in the previously quoted *ḥadīth*. For along with the words, "Then they make him a Jew or a Christian or a Magian," the Prophet (peace be on him) did not say, "or a Muslim". In other narrations of the *ḥadīth*, it states, "is born in the *millah*" or "or in this *millah*,"[10] that means faith.

What the Prophet (peace be on him) stated is also supported by sound rational arguments.

(From among those sound rational arguments) is the following. It is stated that man has beliefs and volitions that are sometimes true and sometimes wrong. He is moved by will or volition. Therefore, he must have at least one of them and he must have some way of deciding on one over the other. We know that if you give a choice to anyone to be truthful and beneficent or lying and harmful he will incline by his nature to being truthful and beneficent. Therefore, recognition of the Creator and belief in Him is truth or its opposite is truth. The latter is definitely not the case; the former must be true. Therefore, there must be something in the person's nature that requires him to know the Creator and believe in Him. Furthermore, it must be the case that having love for Him, the Creator, is either beneficent to the servant or not. The second is definitely not true. It must be the case that he has in his nature a love for what benefits him.

(Another rational argument) is that the person is by nature driven to seek benefit and ward off harm by his senses. Even if not everyone's soul by itself is sufficient to achieve that, but instead he needs some assistance for his natural endowment, such as teaching, then if this condition is met and obstacles are not present, the soul will respond, due to the built-in forces it has.

Similarly, one could say that it is known that every soul is capable of receiving knowledge and yearning for truth. But just teaching and exhortation by themselves do not necessitate knowledge or will unless the soul has the power to accept it. If someone teaches ignorant people or animals and exhorts them, they will not respond. It is also known that the soul, without any external influence, can believe in the possibility of a creator. The soul is sufficient for that. If that driving force is present in the soul and we

[9]Muslim, *Al-Jannah*, 2867; Aḥmad, 4:162, 163, 266; Aṭ-Ṭabarānī, *Al-Kabīr*, 987-996.

[10]These words occur in the *ḥadīth* of Muslim referred to in the previous footnote.

assume that there is no obstacle, then the driving force which is presented with no obstacles will bring about its goal. Therefore, it is concluded that the pure soul or pure human endowment, if met with nothing that corrupts it, will affirm the existence of a creator and will be a servant to Him.

As a corollary to the above, one can argue that if the natural human endowment does not meet with any positive or negative external factors, the natural disposition will drive him to what is good, as the built-in force that allows him to accept knowledge and will is present, while the obstacles are not present.

It is said of Abū Ḥanīfah that a group of the people of *kalām* came to him to discuss the unity of the Creator and the Lord (*tawḥīd ar-rubūbīyyah*). He said to them, "Before we enter into a discussion on this question, tell me what you think of a boat in the Euphrates which goes to shore, loads itself with food and other things, then returns, anchors and unloads all by itself without anyone sailing or controlling it?" They said, "That it is impossible; it could never happen." Thereupon he said to them, "If it is impossible with respect to a ship, how is it possible for this whole world, with all its vastness, to move by itself?" This story has also been narrated from people other than Abū Ḥanīfah.

However, if anyone believes in the unity of the Creator-Lord (*tawḥīd ar-rubūbīyyah*) which theologians and philosophers expound, and in whose ecstatic experience many Ṣūfis try to lose their self-consciousness, considering it to be the end of their pursuit, as the author of *Manāzil as-Sa'irin* and others have stated, but, if at the same time he does not serve Allah alone and eschew the worship of anything else, then he is a polytheist like any other polytheist.

The Qur'ān abounds with statements and parables concerning this type of *tawḥīd*. It first affirms the *tawḥīd ar-rubūbīyyah*, that there is no Creator other than Allah. That requires or necessitates that no one should be worshiped except Allah. It takes the first proposition as evidence for the second proposition. The Arabs believed in the first proposition and disputed the second. Allah then made it clear to them: Since you know that there is no creator except Allah, and that He is the One Who can give a person what benefits him or keep away from him what harms him, and He has no partner in those acts, then how can you worship others besides Him and associate partners with Him in His Godhead?

For example, Allah says in the Qur'ān, "Say: Praise be to Allah and peace be on His servants whom He has chosen (for His message). Who is better: God, or the false gods they associate with Him? Or who has created the heavens and the earth, and who sends

you down rain from the sky with which He brings forth beautiful gardens? It is not in your power to cause the growth of the trees in them. Can there be another god besides Allah? Yet they are a people who assign equals (to Him)" [27:59-60].

At the end of other, similar verses, Allah states, "Can there by another god besides Allah?" [21:6, 63 and 64]. This is a rhetorical question whose answer is definitely in the negative. They accepted the notion that no one but Allah does such things. Allah used that as a proof against them. It does not mean to ask if there is another god besides Allah, as some have claimed. Such a meaning is inconsistent with the context of the verses and since the people actually used to take other gods alongside Allah. As Allah says, "Can you possibly bear witness that besides Allah there is another god? Say: I witness it not" [6:19]. And they used to say (about the Prophet), "Does he make all the gods one? That is truly a strange thing" [38:5]. But they would never say that there was another god (with Allah) that would "make the earth a fixed abode, place rivers in its fold, and place firm hills therein" [16:61]. They accepted the fact that only Allah did all those things. Therefore, Allah says, "People, adore your Guardian-Lord, Who created you and those who went before you that you may learn to be righteous" [2:21], and "Say: Think, if Allah took away your hearing and your sight and sealed up your hearts, who, a god other than Allah, could restore them to you?" [6:46]. And there are similar other verses.

Since *tawḥīd ar-rubūbīyyah*, which the theologians and those Ṣūfis who are in agreement with them consider to be the end-all and goal of their endeavor, is part of the *tawḥīd* which the prophets preached and the heavenly books teach, various evidence exists that point to it, such as other evidence that prove the existence of the Creator and the truthfulness of the Prophet. By Allah's mercy to His creation, the truths that are most important and most needed have the most evident proofs.

Allah has given parables of every kind that contain rational arguments and promote faith. He has narrated stories which teach and discuss signs and proofs. And what is other than truth except error? The Qur'ān makes the truth clear with evidence. However, those premises that are well known and agreed upon are built upon without any need for proving them. The most correct form of exposition in language is that of ellipsis and that is the manner used in the Qur'ān, as opposed to what the ignorant say claiming that there are no demonstrative arguments in the Qur'ān. The Qur'ān, though, does state all the premises when they are not clear or when there is some dispute about them.

Since associating partners with Allah in His Lordship is impossible, according to all peoples, that is, the confirmation of two creators similar in attributes and actions, some of the polytheists advanced the claim that there is another creator that created part of this world. This is what the dualists say concerning "darkness", what the Qadarīyyah say about the actions of animals and what the naturalist philosophers say about the movement of the planets, souls and physical bodies. All of them posit events that are not brought into existence by Allah, and associate partners with Him in the act of creation. They are polytheists in some aspects of *rubūbīyyah*. In fact, many of the Arab polytheists and others thought that their idols could bring about some good or cause some harm even if Allah did not bring such good or harm into existence.

Since that type of *shirk* was found among the people, the Qur'ān makes clear its falsehood. Allah says, "No son did Allah beget, nor is there any god along with Him. If there were many gods, each would have taken away what he had created, and some would have lorded it over others" [23:92]. Reflect on this wonderful argument so briefly and clearly stated: The true God has to be the Creator and the Actor, causing good and warding off evil from His creatures. If there were another god besides Him, sharing in His powers, that other god would also create and act, and he would not be pleased with that partnership. In fact, if he could dominate and subjugate the partner and bring everything under his control, he would have done so. If he were not able to do that, he would have created things by himself and kept all his creation to himself, as the kings of the world keep their kingdoms to themselves when they are not able to subjugate others. Therefore, one of three situations must exist: first, every god keeps his creation and kingdom to himself; second, some dominate others; third, they are all subjugated by the All-Powerful Lord, Who deals with them as He pleases. They are not able to defy Him but must, instead, simply submit to His authority and carry out His command. Therefore, they will actually simply be His servants and bondsmen and He will be the one and only one true God.

The order of the world and its perfect rule is the best argument that its Ruler is only one God, the one King and the one Lord, and that there is no god and no lord of creation other than He. The argument of exclusion says not only that the Creator of the world is only one, but also that He alone is the Lord and God and no one else. Exclusion applies to creation and action as well as to lordship and divinity. In the same way, if it is not possible for there to be two equal lords and creators, it is also not possible for there to be two gods and two beings deserving worship.

The knowledge that there cannot be two equal creators is part of the natural endowment of man, self-evident to his reason. Human nature similarly rejects the idea of two gods. Hence the verdict of the Qur'ān and the verdict of human nature are one regarding the unity of the Creator-Lord that implies and necessitates the unity of Divinity.

Close in meaning to the above verse is Allah's statement, "If there were many gods therein (that is, in the heavens and the earth) besides Allah, they would have surely fallen into chaos" [21:22]. Some people think that this verse states the above-mentioned argument of exclusion, "If there were two creators...", but they fail to note that the verse refers to gods (*alihah*) and not to creator-lords (*arbab*); furthermore, the verse speaks about the world after its creation. It says that if there were many gods in the world, the heavens and the earth would be destroyed. It also states, "it would fall into chaos" and that refers to after its existence. So the verse argues that there cannot be more than one God, that He cannot be other than Allah, and that the destruction of the heavens and the earth would be bound to follow if gods were many or if the one God were other than Allah, and that the order in which we find the heavens and the earth is because there is only one God, Allah. If there were another god besides Him, the heavens and earth would have disintegrated because their survival depends on the justice on which their foundation has been laid, and the greatest form of injustice is polytheism (*shirk*) and the greatest form of justice is *tawḥīd*.

Tawḥīd *al-ilāhīyyah* implies *tawḥīd ar-rubūbīyyah* but not vice-versa. One who cannot create is incompetent and one who is incompetent is not deserving of divinity and worship – of being God. Allah says, "Do they associate with Allah those who cannot create anything and who are themselves created" [7:191], "Can the One Who creates and the one who cannot create be equal? Do you not learn the lesson?" [16:17]; and, "If those were gods besides Allah as they claim, they would have tried to reach the Lord of the Throne" [17:42]. Later scholars differ regarding the meaning of the last verse quoted. Some think that it means that if there were gods besides Allah, the Lord of the Throne, they would try to dominate Him.

The second interpretation, which is the correct interpretation coming from the Elders, such as Qatādah and others, and the only interpretation mentioned by Ibn Jarīr Aṭ-Ṭabarī, is that the other gods would try to seek His favor. It is similar to another verse in the Qur'ān, "Lo, this is an admonition that whosoever will may choose

a way to his Lord" [76:29]. And He says, "If those were gods besides Allah as they claim..." While such people did not claim that there were two creators they instead took other gods as intercessors with Allah and said, "We worship them only so they may bring us near to Allah" [39:3], which is different from what is stated in the first verse.

The *tawḥīd* which the prophets preached and the heavenly books taught are of two kinds: *tawḥīd* in knowledge and recognition and *tawḥīd* in will and intention. The first is to affirm that God is unique in His essence, attributes, names and acts; that there is nothing like Him in any respect; and that He is as He has said about Himself or as His Prophet (peace be on him) has said about Him. The Qur'ān has expounded this type of *tawḥīd* in the clearest fashion, as may be found in the beginning of Sūrat Al-Ḥadīd (Chapter 57), Tā Hā (Chapter 20), the end of Al-Ḥashr (Chapter 59), the beginning of As-Sajdah (Chapter 32), the beginning of Ālī 'Imrān (Chapter 3), all of Al-Ikhlās (Chapter 112), and so on.

The second type of *tawḥīd*, *tawḥīd* in actions and intention, is described in Al-Kāfirūn (Chapter 109), in the verse, "Say: People of the Book, let us agree to a statement common between you and us..." [3:64], in the first and last parts of Az-Zumar (Chapter 39), in the beginning, middle and end of Yūnus (Chapter 10), in the beginning and end of Al-'Arāf (Chapter 7), and the whole of Al-An'ām (Chapter 6).

Most of the Qur'ān - actually all of it - refers to these two kinds of *tawḥīd*. For the Qur'ān either speaks about Allah, His names, attributes and actions, and this is part of *tawḥīd* in knowledge and affirmation, or it calls people to His worship alone, without ascribing any partners to Him and leaving everything that is worshiped other than Him, and this is *tawḥīd* of intention and action. Or it commands, forbids and requires obedience to Him, and this is all part of the rights or implications of *tawḥīd* and its completion. Concerning what is stated of how Allah honors those who believe in *tawḥīd* and how He treats them in this world and what He honors them with in the Hereafter, all of this is the reward for *tawḥīd*. Concerning what is stated about those who have associated partners with Allah and whom He has punished in this life or will punish in the next, this is the just reward of those who abandon *tawḥīd*.

Thus, the entire Qur'ān is about *tawḥīd*, its consequences and the reward for it, as well as *shirk*, those who commit it and the punishment they will suffer for it. (The opening verses of the first

chapter of the Qur'ān), "Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds" is *tawḥīd*; "the Most-Compassionate, the Most-Merciful" is *tawḥīd*; "Master of the Day of Judgment" is *tawḥīd*; "You only do we worship, and in You only do we seek help" is *tawḥīd*; "Guide us to the Straight Path" is *tawḥīd*, as it is a request to be guided to the path of the people of *tawḥīd*, those whom Allah has blessed, "Not those who have earned the wrath of Allah, nor those who have gone astray" or, in other words, those who have forsaken *tawḥīd*.

Furthermore, Allah has himself witnessed to His *tawḥīd* and unity; and His angels, prophets and messengers have witnessed to His unity. Allah says, "There is no god but He. That it is the witness of Allah, His angels and those endowed with knowledge, standing firm on justice. There is no god but He, the Exalted in power, the Wise. Truly, the religion before Allah is Islam (submission to His will)" [3:18-19]. This verse underlines the essence of *tawḥīd* and refutes all those who have wrong beliefs. It mentions the greatest, finest and most truthful testimony from the greatest beings to the greatest reality.

The use by the Elders of the word *shāhida* ('bearing witness') revolves around judgment, ruling, informing, clarifying and reporting. All those uses are correct and there is no contradiction between them. For the word *shahādah* encompasses the statement of the witness as well as his report; but it also encompasses his informing, reporting and clarifying. It has four aspects to it: first, knowledge, understanding and belief in the soundness of what is being witnessed to and confirmed; second, speaking or enunciation about what has been witnessed, for even if he does not tell anyone else about it, he mentions it to himself and remembers it or records it; third, to inform others of it, inform them and clarify the matter to them; fourth, that he complies with what it entails and commands him to do.

Allah's testifying to His own Unity and standing firm on justice involves all four aspects: His knowledge of it, His speaking about it, His informing and telling His creation about it and His commanding them to abide and live by it. As for the aspect of knowledge, the testimony, as a must, definitely includes it. Otherwise it would be a testimony without knowledge of what one is testifying to. Allah says, "Except those who bear witness to the truth and are knowledgeable thereof" [43:86]. And the Prophet

(peace be on him) said, "And similarly I bear witness" and he pointed to the sun.[11]

As for the aspect of speaking it, Allah says, "They make the angels, those servants of the Most Merciful, female. Did they witness their creation? Surely their testimony will be recorded and they will be questioned" [43:19]. Allah has stated that to be a testimony from them, even if they did not state it in the form of testimony and even if they did not pass it on to others.

As for the aspect of informing and reporting to others, there are two types, informing by speech and informing by action. That is the case with everyone who wants to inform someone else of something: sometimes he tells him by his speech and sometimes he tells him by his action. For example, the one who designates his house a mosque, opens its doors wide, clears the way to it and allows people to enter it and pray in it, has actually declared that it is a religious endowment (waqf), even though he did not say so in words. Similarly, the one who tries to get closer to another by various avenues announces to him and to others that he loves that person, even though he did not say so, and vice-versa.

Such is the case with Allah's testimony and His expounding and announcing it. Sometimes He does this by speech and sometimes by action. As for speech, it includes what He sent with messengers and revealed with books. As for His exposition and announcing by His actions, as Ibn Kaysan mentioned, Allah witnesses to it with His marvelous control and order of His creation. This leads to the conclusion that there is no god except He. Another person said in lines of poetry,

" In everything there is a sign of Him/
That points to Him being only One.

What points to testimony also possibly being in actions is the verse in the Qur'ān, "It is not for the idolaters to control maintenance of Allah's houses of worship when they bear witness to their own disbelief" [9:17]. That is, testimony against themselves is found in their actions. The point is that Allah testifies with His created signs that point to His existence, and the evidence is in their being His creation.

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[11]This is part of a *ḥadīth* in which a person asked the Prophet (peace be upon him) about the *shahādah* (testimony of faith) and he said, "Do you see the sun?" He said, "Yes." The Prophet then told him, "Either bear witness similar to that witnessing, or simply leave it." This *ḥadīth* was recorded by Al-Ḥakīm, vol. 4, p. 95, and others. In its chain is Muḥammad Ibn Sulaymān Al-Masmūlī, who is weak.

Concerning being obligated to and following what has been testified to – which is not a necessary component of a simple witnessing per se, but in this case it does point to it and includes it – Allah witnesses to His unity a type of testimony that necessitates that people are ruled by it and He decreed to, commanded and required His servants to abide by it. As Allah states in the Qur'ān, "Your Lord has decreed that you must not worship anyone but Him" [17:23]. He also says, "And Allah has declared: Do not worship two gods" [16:51]; and, "They are commanded naught else than to serve Allah" [98:5]; also, "Assign no other god with Allah" [17:39]; and again, "And never call upon any god besides Allah" [28:88]. In fact, all of the Qur'ān bears testimony to that.

That it is obligatory to obey and follow His testimony can be seen in the following arguments. When He testifies that there is no god but He, He is enunciating, clarifying, instructing, judging and decreeing that nothing besides Him is a god, and that anything taken as god other than Him is false. This means that nothing is deserving of worship other than He, in the same way that no other thing is worthy of being divine. Therefore, that necessitates the command to take only Him as God, and the prohibition against taking anything with Him as a god. This is what the addressee understands from that form of negation and confirmation.

In the same manner, if you saw someone asking another person for a religious verdict, or calling upon a specific person to be a witness, or referring to someone for medical advice and these people were not qualified for those jobs and the persons who were qualified were ignored, you would say, "That person is not a jurist; that person cannot be a witness; and that other person is not a doctor. But so-and-so is qualified as a jurist, and so-and-so is qualified as a witness, and so-and-so is qualified as a doctor." This is, in reality, a command from Him and a prohibition.

Similarly, the verses point to Him being the only One deserving of worship. When He enunciates that He is the only One worthy of worship, it follows that this enunciation is a command to the servants to fulfill the statement and worship Him in the manner that He deserves and to fulfill that command solely and sincerely for Him as is His right upon them.

Furthermore, the words "judgment" and "decree" are used in declarative sentences. In such sentences one says, "decree" and "judgment". Allah says, "Beware! It is their own lie that they assert, 'Allah has begotten offspring.' They are certainly liars. Has he chosen daughters in preference to sons? What is the matter with you? How you judge!" [37:151-154]. Allah declared their plain statement as a judgment. Allah also said, "Will we treat those who

submit to Allah like the sinful? What has come over you that you form such a judgment!" [68:35-36]. However, that judgment has nothing making it obligatory to be implemented; but the judgment and decree that there is no god but He includes such an obligation.

If (the *shahādah*) were simply meant to be a declaration, they would not be able to know the meaning of it or benefit from it, nor would the *shahādah* be a proof against them. But the *shahādah* does encompass a declaration for the servants and evidence and clarification of what he is witnessing to. Like the case of a human witness who has testimony but does not declare or divulge it, but instead conceals it, nobody would benefit from it and no proof would be based upon his witness.

If it cannot be benefited from except through declaring and clarifying it, then Allah has made a complete exposition and declaration by three means: hearing, seeing and reason.

As for hearing, it is through hearing His verses that are recited and are clear that we know of His perfect attributes, of His unity and of other matters in the clearest fashion. It is not the case, as the Jahmīyyah and those who agree with them of the Mu'tazilah claim, that one should deny some of His attributes, claiming that they may lead to confusion and loss, as this denies the clarity of Allah's Book, which Allah has described as clear, and of that of His Messenger. Allah says, "*Hā Mīm*. By the book that makes things clear" [43:1-2]. "*Alif Lām Rā*. These are the verses of the clear book" [12:1]. "*Alif Lām Rā*. These are the verses of the Book and a clear reading" [15:1]. "This is a clear declaration to all of mankind and guidance and admonition for the God-conscious" [3:138]. "Know that the obligation on Our Messenger is simply plain conveyance (of the Message)" [5:92]. "We have revealed to you the Reminder for you to explain to mankind what has been revealed for them. Perhaps they will reflect" [16:44].

Similarly, the Sunnah of the Prophet (peace be on him) is filled with statements that explain or concur with what the Qur'ān states. When it comes to matters related to the foundations of our religion, Allah has never made it necessary for us to turn to the personal opinions, intuition or instincts of any human being.

That is why we find that those who differ from the Book and Sunnah are always in confused disagreement. In fact, Allah has stated, "This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed my favor upon you, and granted my pleasure to Islam as the religion for you" [5:3]. Therefore, it is not necessary to complete or complement the religion with anything that comes from outside the Book and the Sunnah.

That is the meaning that Sheikh Abū Ja'far Aṭ-Ṭaḥāwī, may Allah have mercy on Him, was alluding to in his coming statement, "We do not interpret His words according to our fancy, for no one can secure his faith unless he submits to God and His Prophet completely."

As for His created, witnessed signs, one can look at them and infer from them the same that can be inferred from His signs that are stated and passed on (that is, verses of the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth* of the Prophet, peace be on him. Reason combines both of them and declares definitively the correctness of what the messengers brought. Therefore, the witness of hearing, sight, reason and natural endowment are all in agreement.

Due to His complete justice, mercy, goodness, witness, love for vindication and establishment of the proof and truth, He did not send any messenger without signs that pointed to his truthfulness concerning what he stated about His Lord. Allah says, "We truly sent Our messengers with clear proofs, and revealed with them the Scripture and the Balance, that mankind may observe justice" [57:25]; and, "And We sent not before you other than men whom We inspired – ask the followers of the remembrance if you know not – with clear proofs and writings" [16:43-44]; "Say: Messengers came to you before me with clear signs and what you are now asking for" [3:183]. And Allah says, "And if they deny you, even so did they deny messengers who were before you who came with miracles and with the Psalms and with the Scripture giving light" [3:184].

Allah also says, "Allah it is Who revealed the Scripture with Truth and the Balance" [42:17]. Even the most indistinct sign of any messenger, that of Hūd, whose people said to him, "You have not brought us any clear proof" [11:53], was a very clear sign for anyone Allah allowed to ponder it. Allah alludes to it in these words, "I (Hūd) call Allah to witness, and do you also bear witness, that I am innocent of all that you ascribe as partners beside Him. So (try to) circumvent me, all of you, and give me no respite. Lo! I have put my trust in Allah, my Lord and your Lord. Not an animal is there but He does grasp it by the forelock. Lo! my Lord is on the Straight Path" [11:54-56]. That is the greatest of signs: that a single individual could address a great nation with that speech without any fear, apprehension or anguish. In fact, he was fully confident and certain of what he was saying. First, he took Allah as a witness that he was innocent of their religion and what they were following. It was the type of testimony that he could be certain of and could rely upon. He informed his people that Allah was his friend and

supporter and that He would not allow them to gain control over him.

Then he testified to them in frank testimony that he had nothing to do with their religion and the gods that they aligned themselves with and who they would oppose others for and would sacrifice their blood and wealth on behalf of. Then he stressed that upon them by showing disdain for their idols, and he looked down upon them with contempt. If they all worked together against him to relieve themselves of him, that would not slow him down. Then he clearly explained to them his message. He made it clear to them that His Lord and their Lord, in Whose hand was everybody's forelock, was his helper and protector Who supported him and aided him, and that he was along the straight path, and that He would not leave anyone who put his trust in Him and believed in Him. And He would not let his enemies rejoice at his misfortune.

What sign or proof is better than those of the prophets and their proofs and evidence? They are testimonials from Allah for them and He made it clear as clear as could be for His servants.

One of the names of Allah is Al-Mu'min. And, according to one explanation of its meaning, it means that He is the One Who proves the veracity of the truthful by doing the things that bear testimony to their truthfulness. He shows mankind, for example, signs on the horizons and in their own selves that make it clear to them that the revelation that the messengers conveyed is true. Allah says, "We will show them Our signs on the horizons and within themselves until it will be manifest to them that it is the truth" [41:53], that is, that the Qur'ān is true. It is what is referred to in the verse previous to it, "Bethink you: if it is from Allah..." [41:52]. And then He says, "Does not your Lord suffice, since He is witness over all things?" [41:52]. Allah testifies for His Messenger by His statement that what He brought is the truth and by promising to show mankind created signs that also witness to that. Then Allah mentions what is even greater and more profound than all of that and that is His witness of everything.

Another of His names is Ash-Shahīd, which means the One from Whom nothing is hidden or escapes. He sees and observes everything and is knowledgeable of its details. This is a proof from His names and attributes. The first is a proof from His words and speech. And proof by His signs in the horizons and in the souls is an inference from His actions and creation.

If you ask how one can infer from His names and attributes, as using them as inference never occurred in terminology, the response to that is that Allah placed in human disposition (*fiṭrah*), when it is not defiled by denial or rejection, or by anthropomorphism, that

Allah is complete and perfect in His names and attributes. He is as He has been described by Himself or by His messengers. What is hidden of His perfection is greater (than what is known) and is greater than what is known from Him.

And from His holy perfection is His witnessing and observing everything, such that not an iota, hidden or apparent, in the heavens or the earth is hidden from Him. From this characteristic of His, how can human beings ascribe partners to him, worship others besides Him and take other gods? How can He, with His perfection, allow anyone to commit the greatest falsehood against Him and report something about Him contrary to what He has commanded and then, beyond that, even help that liar, support him, raise his position, respond to his call, destroy his enemy and show through him signs and evidence that other strong human beings would not be capable of, and, given all of that, that person is a liar and forger? It is well-known that His being a witness of everything, His ability, His wisdom, His honor and holy perfection would not allow that. Whoever would say that such is permissible is a person furthest away from actually knowing Him.

The Qur'ān is filled with this type of argument. It is the approach of those well-grounded in knowledge. They argue concerning Allah by His actions and what actions are fit for Him to do or not to do. Allah says in the Qur'ān, "And if he had invented false sayings concerning Us, We assuredly would have taken him by the right hand and then severed his life-artery. And not one of you could have held Us off from him" [69:44-47]. This will be discussed in more detail later, God willing.

His names and attributes are also used as evidence of His unity and the falsehood of polytheism. Note the verse, "He is Allah. There is no god but He, the Sovereign-Lord, the Holy One, the Fountain of Peace, the Preserver of Security, the Protecting Guardian, the Exalted in Power, the Dominant, the Great Supreme. Glorified be Allah above all that they associated with Him" [59:23]. This (kind of argument) can be found many times in the Qur'ān.

This approach, though, is followed by a very few; only the elect, well-grounded in knowledge, are guided to it. The majority of people use as proof the signs that can be witnessed, as they are easier to convey and more encompassing. And Allah exalts some of His creation over others.

The Qur'ān has combined some aspects that are not combined elsewhere. It is both the evidence and what is being proved, as well as the witness and what is being witnessed to. Allah says in the Qur'ān to anyone who is seeking evidence that His messenger is truthful, "Is it not enough for them that We have sent down to you

this Book which is rehearsed to them? In this is surely a mercy and a reminder for the people who believe..." [29:51].

Now that it is established that *tawḥīd al-ilāhīyyah* is what the prophets preached and what the heavenly books taught, as has been pointed out, one should not heed the statement of those who divide *tawḥīd* into three types (as in the following manner). This first type of *tawḥīd*, they say, is the *tawḥīd* of the common people. The second type is the *tawḥīd* of the elect, which, they say, is the *tawḥīd* that is realized in mystical experience. The third is the *tawḥīd* of the elect of the elect. This *tawḥīd*, they believe, is affirmed by the Eternal Being Himself. However, one should not heed these statements, for the people who were most perfect in *tawḥīd* were the prophets (peace be on them all).

The messengers were even greater than they, especially those of resolute purpose, namely Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muḥammad (peace be on them all). Of these, two - the most beloved of Allah - Abraham and Muḥammad, were the most complete in *tawḥīd* for they fulfilled the demands of *tawḥīd* more than anyone else – demands regarding faith, knowledge, experience, calling men to it and striving for its cause. No *tawḥīd* can be more complete than the *tawḥīd* which the messengers stated, preached and struggled for. That is why Allah commanded His Prophet (peace be on him) to follow in their footsteps. After describing Abraham's argument with his people in support of *tawḥīd* and his denunciation of *shirk*, and after mentioning other prophets among his descendants, Allah says, "Those were the ones who received Allah's guidance; follow then their way" [6:90]. No one can be more complete in *tawḥīd* than those whom the Prophet (peace be upon him) was told to follow.

The Prophet (peace be on him) used to teach his companions that they should say in the morning, "We begin our day on the pattern (*fiṭrah*) of Islam. The statement of sincerity, the religion of our Prophet, Muḥammad, and the faith (millah) of our forefather, Abraham, who submitted himself sincerely to Allah and did not associate anyone with Him."[12] The *millah* of Abraham is *tawḥīd*. The religion of Muḥammad is every statement, action, and belief that He brought from Allah. The statement of sincerity is the testimony that there is no god but Allah. The *fiṭrah* of Islam is the natural disposition man has been given to love and worship only Allah, without ascribing any partner to Him, and submitting to Him with complete servitude, humility and reverence.

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[12]Aḥmad, 3:406, 407; Ad-Dārimī, 2:292. Its chain is *ṣaḥīḥ*.

This is the *tawḥīd* of the most elite or dear from among the chosen ones of Allah. Whoever turns away from it is the fool of all fools. Allah has Himself said, "Who turns away from the faith of Abraham but such as debase their souls with folly? Him We chose and rendered pure in this world, and he will be in the Hereafter in the ranks of the righteous. Behold! His Lord said to him, 'Submit to me, (and) he said, 'I submit to the Lord and Cherisher of the Universe'" [2:130-131].

The one with intelligence and sense is not in need of the arguments of the dialectitians and the theologians or their terms and methods. In fact, they may only lead him to doubts that will further lead him to confusion, bewilderment and misbelief. Truly, *tawḥīd* is beneficial when the heart is free of all of those (diseases), that is, the sound heart, concerning which no one will prosper unless he approaches Allah with such a heart.

The second and third types of *tawḥīd*, which have been called the *tawḥīd* of the elect and that of the elect of the elect, culminate in the passing away of the self (fanā) which most Ṣūfis strive for. It is a dangerous alley which leads to (the concept of) union (*ittihad*]. Read these lines which Sheikh Al-Islam Abū Isma'īl Al-Anṣārī Al-Harwī, may Allah have mercy on him, composed,[13]

> No one affirms the unity of the One
> for whoever affirms His unity denies it.
> Whoever describes Him, His description of Unity
> is void and unacceptable to the One.
> The real affirmation of His unity
> is what the One Himself does, and
> whoever tries to describe Him is a heretic.

Although the author of these lines did not mean to imply union (*ittihad*), he has used vague words which an proponent of union is likely to interpret on his lines and think that the author belongs to his way of thinking. Had he used the words which the Shari'ah uses and which are clear and non-misleading, it would have been more

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[13]For a review and criticism of Al-Anṣāri's views expressed in these lines of poetry, see Ibn Qayyīm Al-Jawzīyyah (also know as Ibn Al-Qayyīm), *Madārij as-Sālikīn*, ed. by Muḥammad Hāmid Al-Fiqī (Cairo: Al-Maṭba'ah al-Muḥammadīyyah, 1375/1976), vol. 3, p. 518. Ibn Al-Qayyīm makes the point that in various verses of the Qur'ān, Allah has testified that His angels, His prophets, and their followers who have knowledge affirm and expound His unity. It is not, therefore, correct for anyone to say that no one has truly affirmed God's unity and that those who have ventured so have been guilty of heresy.

correct. Had we been required to believe in what these lines suggest, the Prophet (peace be upon him) would have mentioned it, invited people to believe in it, and explained it at length. But there is no proof that he ever distinguished between a *tawḥīd* of the commoner, a *tawḥīd* of the elect and a *tawḥīd* of the elect of the elect. There is absolutely no allusion to it anywhere. In fact, there is nothing even close to it.

Here is the Book of Allah, the *ḥadīth* of the Prophet (peace be on him), the traditions of the best people of all ages after the age of the Prophet, and the works of the leading scholars. Is there any mention of *fana* in any of them? Has any one of them talked about these levels of *tawḥīd*? In fact, this concept developed later, when some people became excessive with respect to some parts of the religion, just as the Khawārij did earlier in Islam or the Christians did in their religion. Allah has condemned all excesses in religion and has strictly prohibited them. Allah states, "People of the Book! Commit not excesses in your religion; nor say aught of Allah except the truth" [4:171]. And also, "Say: People of the Book! Exceed not in your religion the bounds (of what is proper), trespassing beyond truth, nor follow the vain desires of people who went wrong in times gone by, who mislead many and strayed themselves from the even way" [5:77].

The Prophet (peace be on him) said, "Do not commit excess and make things difficult for yourselves, for Allah will then make things difficult for you. From among those who came before you were people who went to excesses, and Allah made things difficult for them. It is their remnants that you see in the cloisters and monasteries. 'They invented monasticism. We did not prescribe it for them' [57:27]."[14] Abū Dāwūd recorded this *ḥadīth*.

(2) There is nothing like Him.

The Ahl as-Sunnah are agreed that nothing is like Allah, not in His essence, attributes or acts. However, the word *tashbīh* ('to liken') as people have come to use it, is rather vague. It has its proper sense, which is what the Qur'ān denies (concerning Allah) and which agrees with reason. It means that the attributes characteristic of Allah cannot be ascribed to created beings,. for nothing is like Allah in any of His attributes, "Nothing is like Him"

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[14] Abū Dāwūd, Al-Adab, 4904; Abū Ya'la, *Musnad*, ed. by Ḥussayn Salām Asad (Damascus: Dār al-Mamūn li at-Turāth, 1406/1986), *ḥadīth* no. 3694. Al-Albānī has stated that this *ḥadīth* is weak.

[42:11]. It refutes those who set up a comparison or a resemblance of anything with God. On the other hand, when it says, "And He is All-Hearing and All-Seeing" [42:11], it censures those who would strip Allah of His attributes and negate them. One who likens the attributes of Allah with those of the created beings is an anthropomorphist (*mushābbih*), and should be censured and condemned. Similarly, one who conceives the attributes of the created beings on the pattern of Allah's attributes is guilty of the blasphemy which the Christians commit.

Some people use the word *tashbīḥ* in a different sense and, on that account, they refrain from affirming the attributes of Allah. They say that Allah cannot be said to have power, knowledge or life, because these are attributable to humans. It follows from this view that we cannot call Allah Living, Knowing or Powerful, because these names are also used to describe human beings. The same applies to Allah's speech, hearing, seeing and will. However, these people agree with the Ahl as-Sunnah that Allah exists, that He is Knowing, Powerful and Living, and that created beings can also be said to be existing, knowing and powerful. They also agree that this is not the kind of *tashbīh* that is to be negated. This is also upheld by the Qur'ān and Sunnah, as well as by clear reasoning. No reasonable person would dispute it.

Allah has called Himself by certain names and He also called some of His servants by the same names. He has also qualified Himself with certain attributes and, at the same time qualified different beings that He created with the same attributes. But neither one named is the same as the other named, nor is one attribute the same as the other attribute. He has called Himself Living, Knowing, Powerful, Compassionate, Merciful, Mighty, Wise, Hearing, Seeing, King, Guardian (Al-Mu'min), Irresistible (Al-Jabbār), Justly Proud (Al-Mustakbīr), and He has called many of His servants by these same names. For example, He has said, "He brings out the living from the dead" [6:95; 30:19]; "They gave him the good news that he would have a knowledgeable son" [51:28]; "(The Prophet) is compassionate and merciful to the Believers" [9:128]; "We made (man) a hearing and seeing being" [76:2]; "The wife of the mighty officer said..." [12:51]; "There was a king after him" [18:79]; "One who is a Believer (*mū'min*)" [32:18]; and, "Allah seals the heart of every arrogant (*mustakbīr*) and obstinate transgressor (*jabbār*)" [40:35]. But we know that the One Living Being is not like the other living being, the One Knowing Being is not like the other knowing being, and the Mighty One is not like the other mighty, and so on with respect to the other names.

And Allah has also said, "They would not encompass aught of His knowledge" [2:255]; "He has sent it from His own knowledge" [4:166]; "No woman conceives or gives birth without His knowledge" [35:11]; "Allah is the One Who gives sustenance, Lord of unbreakable power" [51:58]; and, "Did they not see that Allah created them and that He is more powerful than they" [41:15].

Jābir narrated that the Prophet (peace be on him) used to teach the Companions (the supplication of) istikharah in the same way that he would teach them a chapter of the Qur'ān. He said, "When you face a situation or problem, offer two rak'at of prayer other than the obligatory ones and say, 'O Allah, I appeal to your knowledge to let me know what is good for me, and I appeal to your power to enable me to do it, and I pray for one of Your great blessings. For You can do anything but I cannot. You know everything and I do not. O Allah, You are aware of all hidden things. If You know that this thing is good for me, for my religion and my life in this world and the next (or here and hereafter), then grant it to me, make it easy for me and bless it. If you know that this deed is bad for me in my religion and my life in this world and the next (or here and hereafter), then turn it from me and provide for me good, wherever it is." After this, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, the person should state whatever he wants.[15] This *ḥadīth* was recorded by Al-Bukhārī.

An-Nasā'ī and others recorded a *ḥadīth* narrated by Ammār Ibn Yāsir that the Prophet (peace be on him) used to invoke Allah in these words, "O Allah, I appeal to Your knowledge of things unseen and to Your power over creation. Let me live as long as living is good for me. Let me die when death is good for me. O Allah, help me fear you in public and in secret. Help me tell the truth in anger and in joy. Let me follow the middle course in prosperity as well as in adversity. Grant me the blessing that has no end and the happiness that lasts forever. Let me submit to Your decree without a murmur, and let me have a good life after death. O Allah, grant me the joy of seeing Your face and the love for meeting You, and save me from the harm it might cause and the trouble it might lead to. O Allah, adorn us with faith and help us guide people to the right path."[16]

(It is clear from the above Qur'ānic verses and *ḥadīth*) that Allah and His Prophet (peace be on him) have ascribed various attributes

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[15]Al-Bukhārī, 1162, 6382, 7390; Abū Dāwūd, *Aṣ-Ṣalāh*, 1538; At-Tirmidhī, *Aṣ-Ṣalāh*, 480; An-Nasā'ī, *An-Nikāḥ*, 6:80-81; Ibn Mājah, 1383; Aḥmad, 3:344.
[16]An-Nasā'ī, *As-Sahw*, 3:54-55; Aḥmad, 4:264. Its chain is *ṣaḥīḥ*.

to Allah, such as knowledge, power and might. Allah, for example, says, "He gave power to man after he was weak" [30:54], and, "...he possesses knowledge since We have given it to him" [12:68]. Everyone knows that one knowledge is not like the other knowledge, and one power is not like the other power. There are many more verses and *aḥādīth* of this nature that underscore the truth for one who would reflect.

Whoever negates attributes like pleasure (*rida*), anger (*ghadab*), love (*ḥubb*), and hate (*baghd*) which Allah has affirmed of Himself, because in their view it means comparing Allah with His creatures (*tashbih*) and ascribing to Him a body (*tajsim*), may be told that you yourselves do affirm attributes like Allah's will, speech, hearing and seeing, and simply qualify them by saying, "They are not like the attributes of the creatures. So why should you not make the same qualification with regard to these attributes and affirm them of Allah, as He and His Prophet have done? There is no difference between these two kinds of attributes."

If he says, "I do not affirm any of the attributes of Allah," say to him, "You affirm that He has the Most Beautiful Names, such as Living, Knowing and Powerful. But human beings are also called by these names, although to avoid misunderstanding you add that divine names are not like human names. The question is why don't you say the same thing about Allah's attributes? Affirm them of Allah and add that they are not like human attributes."

If he says, "I do not affirm that He has the Most Beautiful Names, but I say that they are simply allegorical or metaphorical," that is the view of the extremists among the esoterics (*bāṭinīyyah*) and the philosophers. Say to him, "You must believe that He is there, that He is real, existing of Himself, and that there are also bodies there existing in themselves, but Allah is not like them. (Don't you then contradict yourself?)"

If he says, "I do not affirm anything. In fact, I deny the existence of the Necessary Being." Then say to him, "It is well known by sound reasoning that whatever exists either exists necessarily by itself or does not exist by itself. It is either eternal and without a beginning, or contingent, coming into existence after a time when it was not there. It is either created and produced by a creator or uncreated, needing no creator. It is either dependent on something else or it is self-sufficient. Obviously, what is not necessary by itself needs, in order to exist, something that is necessary by itself. A contingent being needs an eternal being; a created being needs a creator; a dependent being needs a being that is self-sufficient. Since one of the contraries exists, it follows that

there must be a Being there, existing necessarily by Itself, Eternal and Beginningless, Creator, Self-Sufficient and Independent of all. It also follows that all other beings must be just the opposite.

We certainly know by our senses and self-evident reasoning that there are contingent things that have come into existence after they were non-existent. We also know that a contingent being cannot exist by itself, nor can it exist eternally without a beginning, nor can it create other things by itself and be self-sufficient and independent. This means that there must be, of necessity, two existences: one necessary and the other possible; one eternal and the other contingent; one self-sufficient and the other dependent; one Creator and the other created; even though both exist and exist in themselves.

We also know that one is not like the other in its essence, because if they were alike in everything, in necessity, possibility or impossibility, one would have to be necessary and eternal, existing by itself, and the other would have to be possible and existing by itself; one would have to be the Creator and the other would have to be created; one would have to be self-sufficient and the other dependent. Had they been alike, each would have been necessarily eternal as well as non-eternal, existing by itself as well as not existing by itself, creator as well as created, self-sufficient as well as dependent. That would mean the co-existence of contraries, which is ruled out. Thus reason upholds what the Shari'ah says: the two cannot be alike.

It is clear from the above arguments that the Creator and the created are similar in some respects and differ in others. Hence, one who denies what is common between them is a negator (of divine attributes) and is surely mistaken. On the other hand, one who makes them alike anthropomorphizes Allah and is equally mistaken. And Allah knows best. That is because, even though they are called by the same names, they are not identical: Allah has His own existence, knowledge, power and all other attributes in which man cannot participate. Similarly, man has his existence, knowledge and power, and Allah is too exalted to participate in what is particular to man. That which is common between them - existence, knowledge, power, and so on - is nothing more than a general concept, simply a mental concept that does not really exist out there in reality. What exists out there is specific to each, without the one participating in the other.

Many thinkers are confused on this point. Some think that, since the Creator and created share in what these things connote, the existence of God should be like the existence of men. Others, on the contrary, think that the term existence (wujud) has no common

connotation, but this contradicts reason. The fact is that these terms are general and may be divided into categories. As was said, for example, existence may be divided into necessary or possible, eternal or contingent. The term existence that is divided is common between the two. This is in contrast to such common words as mushtarī, which means a buyer as well as the planet Jupiter. They have no common divisible connotation; we can only say that mushtarī sometimes designates one thing and sometimes the other. The reader may seek a detailed discussion of this point in the relevant works.

The root cause of the error is the common belief that what is designated by these general terms is something universal and that it exists in one particular individual or another; but this is not the case, for what exists out there (as a rational concept) does not exist as an absolute universal, but only as a determinate particular. When these terms are used in reference to Allah, they connote something specific to Him; and when they are used in reference to human beings, they connote something specific to them. Hence, nothing shares with Allah in His existence or life. In fact, nothing or no one shares in the existence of anything or anyone else. If that is true, how can anything partake in the existence of the Creator? Don't you see that when you say, "this" or "that", you point to one and the same thing but from two different angles?

From this and similar arguments it should be clear that the anthropomorphists refer to *tashbīh* and add to it what is not true. They certainly do go astray, therefore. On the other hand, the negators of Allah's attributes begin with negating similarity in one aspect and then extend it to other aspects which are not true. They also go astray, then. It is also clear that the Qur'ān tells the pure truth, which is also upheld by unclouded reason and which is free from every error.

The negators (of Allah's attributes) do well in putting Allah beyond all likeness to His creatures, but they do wrong when they at the same time negate ideas which are true of Allah. The anthropomorphists, on the other hand, do well in their endeavor to affirm Allah's attributes, but they do wrong when they conceive of them as on the pattern of human attributes.

One should realize that one cannot teach another the meaning of a word unless that person knows the object it refers to, knows something which is similar to it, or has some features in common with it; without that he cannot understand the meaning of the word. When you teach the meaning of a sentence, you begin by telling the meaning of the individual words, and when you teach a child how to talk, you say a word and point to the object it refers to, if it is

something physical. You say, for example, milk, bread, mother, father, sky, earth, sun, moon, water, and so on, and point along with that to the objects you name; otherwise you cannot teach the meaning of any word or convey any idea. No human being can dispense with auditory learning.[17] Adam, the father of mankind, first learned things through hearing, when Allah "taught him all the names,"[18] spoke to him and revealed to him all that he could not learn simply by reasoning.

Hence, a word comes to mean something because it refers to what the speaker wants and intends in his heart to convey. Since the intention is a matter in one's heart, the word cannot convey the meaning just by itself. One cannot learn an idea without a word, but one can also not learn it unless one knows what is intended by the speaker. When one knows that, and then hears the word a second time, one understands the meaning conveyed by the word even if the speaker does not point it out. If the object referred to, though, is something experienced internally, such as hunger, satiation, thirst, quenching of thirst, sorrow or joy, no one can understand it unless he experiences himself what the word stands for. Only after he has experienced it will he understand the word when he hears it. Then we may sometimes refer in such cases to his own feeling of hunger or thirst. When, for example, he is hungry, we can say, "You are hungry." He will then hear the words and understand what we are referring to by pointing it out or through circumstantial evidence. For example, he will understand when he sees his mother looking at him when he is hungry and infers from seeing her eyes or any other of her gestures that she is referring to his hunger, or when he hears some people referring through those means to the hunger of any other person.

If that is comprehended, then when someone wants to teach anything, there are the following possibilities. Either his listener will comprehend him with his senses, observation or mind, or he will not comprehend him. In the first two cases, it is only necessary that he know the language, knowing the meaning of every word individually and in a sentence. If he hears, for example, the verse, "Have We not made for him a pair of eyes, and a tongue and a pair of lips" [90:9], or the verse, "It is Allah Who brought you forth from the wombs of your mothers when you knew nothing, and (He) gave you hearing and sight, intelligence and affections, that you may give thanks (to Allah)" [16:78], he will understand them in the light

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[17] or, in the case of the deaf, an adequate substitute (ed.)

[18] See Qur'ānic verse 2:31.

of his sense experience. But if the meaning that one is trying to pass on to him is not one that he can comprehend through what he senses or witnesses, the only way to make him understand it is to explain it through analogy, simile and allusion based upon the similarity or resemblance the idea may have to objects he knows. The more perfect the simile, the better it will describe the object and the more conducive for understanding it will be.

When the Messenger (peace be on him) explained to us matters that were not known before him, and there was no word that particularly described it, he would use a term whose connotation was closest to the concept he wanted to convey and he would call it by that term. Thus, there was something common between the concept and the term. This is true of words like *ṣalāh* (prayer), *zakāh* (poor-due), *ṣawm* (fasting), *īmān* (faith) and *kufr* (disbelief). Similarly, when he wanted to inform them about matters related to faith in Allah and the Last Day, they were actually unfamiliar with such concepts before that time and did not have any terms that referred to those concepts exactly, he used the words of their language that were most suitable and that had some common connotation between the unknown things that he was trying to explain and the things that they were familiar with. He also used to make some gestures or signs that helped people understand exactly what he wanted to say, as one does when teaching a child. Rabi'ah Ibn 'Abdur-Raḥmān said, "Common people are taught by scholars in the same way children are taught by their parents."

But when the Messenger spoke about unseen things, it was quite possible that people had been aware of similar things in their observation or thought. For example, when he said that the people of 'Ad were destroyed by a strong wind, there was nothing strange in this to them. For the people of 'Ad were human beings like themselves and the wind, even though it was extremely violent, was like the winds they were aware of. Similarly, there was nothing strange to them in the drowning of Pharaoh in the sea or the narratives of the other people of the past. And this is why their narratives have a lesson for us, as Allah has said, "There is a lesson for intelligent people in their stories" [12:111].

The Messenger (peace be on him) sometimes told of things the likes of which, in every respect, people had never seen; however, the elements that they consisted of may have resembled elements that they were aware of. For example, when he spoke about things of the Unseen, concerning Allah or the Hereafter, they must have been aware of certain ideas common between the elements of the things the Prophet spoke of and the elements of things in this life that they knew through their senses and reason. But if they had not

previously observed that visible object, and he wanted them to perceive it and observe it thoroughly so they could know the thing common between it and the object unseen, he would show them that object or point to it or describe it in words so as to give a picture of it to his audience. They then understood that the way to know things that are unseen is through things that are visible.

There are then three steps that one must realize. First, perception of visible objects; second, comprehension of general ideas; and, third, awareness of words that signify those sensible and rational ideas. These three steps are involved in every speech act. When we want to talk about unseen things, we have to point out the ideas that are common between those things and the objects that we observe, as well as underline their resemblance. We have to state that they resemble visible objects and point out those objects. If they are like them, we do not have to mention how they differ from those objects, as was the case with the stories of the people of the past. But if they are not that similar, we have to point out the difference. We can say that one is not exactly like the other, or something similar to that. If we deny likeness, that itself will suffice to underline the difference. However, the denial of likeness does not mean negation of the common element which is connoted by the word common to them. This is how we can understand the unseen things. Were there nothing in common, no one could talk about any of the unseen things.

(3) Nothing is impossible for Him.

This is due to His complete Power. Allah says, "Truly Allah can do anything" [2:20]; "Allah has power over all things" [18:45]; "Allah is never frustrated by anything whatsoever in the heavens and the earth, for He is All-Knowing and All-Powerful" [35:44]; and, "His Throne extends over the heavens and the earth, and He feels no fatigue in preserving them, and He is the Most High, the Supreme (in glory)" [2:255]. In the last verse, the words are lā ya'udūhū, which means nothing causes Him any trouble or fatigue and nothing is beyond His means. This negation is because the opposite attribute of perfection has been established for Allah. In the Qur'ān and Sunnah, whenever anything is negated of Allah it is because Allah is qualified with the opposite attribute of perfection. For example, Allah's statement, "Your Lord does not treat anyone with injustice" [18:49], is true because He is completely just. Similarly, when He says, "Not the least little atom in the heavens and on earth is hidden from Him" [34:3], this is true because of His perfect knowledge. Or when he says, "No fatigue overtook Us" [50:38], this is the case

because of His complete power. And "No slumber can seize Him nor sleep" [2:255] is true because of His complete, living, unlimited energy and complete power to control and sustain the world. The verse, "No vision can grasp Him" [6:103], similarly asserts His sublime majesty and glory. If this were not true there would have been no benefit in simply negating something. Pure negation is not a complement. Note the lines of the poet:

> The small tribe does not violate any pact
> Nor does it wrong anyone even the slightest amount.

When the denial of injustice and wrongdoing in that passage is looked at in its complete context and his use of the words, "small tribe", it becomes clear that he is referring to their weakness and inability (to harm others) and not their complete power. Another said:

> Although my tribe has many,
> They do no evil, not even minute.

When he denies their evil in a way that is blaming them, it becomes clear that he is referring to their weaknesses and inabilities.

That is why the Qur'ān states the positive attributes of Allah in detail and refers to the negative attributes in brief or in general. The blameworthy theologians, on the other hand, followed the opposite method. They discussed the negative attributes at length and mentioned the positive attributes only briefly. They said, for example, "Allah is neither a body nor a figure, neither matter or form, nor has He flesh, blood, or personality; He is neither a substance nor an accident; He has no smell, no color and no taste. He is neither hot nor cold, neither wet nor dry. He has no length, breadth or depth; He neither assembles nor disintegrates; He neither moves nor is at rest; He is indivisible, having no parts, organs or members; He has no dimension, right, left, front, behind, above or below; No space surrounds Him and no time limits Him; He neither goes near a thing nor away from it, nor does He enter anything; no attributes are to be ascribed to Him that also pertain to created objects and suggest their contingency; He cannot be said to have an end, a side or movement; He is not a finite being; He neither begets nor is He begotten; He is above all determination and beyond all limitation," and so on until the end of the statement that Abū Al-Ḥassan Al-Ash'arī recorded in describing the creed of the Mu'tazilah.

This passage contains things that are right and things that are wrong, and that is clear to anyone who is familiar with the Book and the Sunnah. The presentation of pure negatives only, without any laudatory statements, is indecorous and improper. If you were to say to a ruler, "You are not a garbage collector, or a barber, or a weaver," he would certainly censure you even though there is nothing false in what you said. But you would praise him if you made the negations general and said, for example, "You are not like anyone under your charge; you are superior, more honorable and more esteemed than they." If you are general in a negative statement, you are being more courteous and mannerly.

The way of the Ahl as-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah is to describe Allah in words which Allah has chosen to describe Himself or that His prophet used for Him. Those who negate the attributes of Allah neglect the words that Allah and His Prophet have used concerning His names and attributes and they do not ponder the meanings of such terms. They think that the concepts and the terms which they have invented present the faith more faithfully and should be accepted. The Ahl as-Sunnah, on the other hand, believe that the words of Allah and His Prophet present the true faith and must be adhered to. They either ignore what those others say, or judge their terms at length in light of the Qur'ān and Sunnah. But they never judge the Qur'ān and Sunnah in the light of what they say.

In short, the creed of such people consists mostly of negatives, "He is not this, He is not that..." They rarely affirm anything of Allah, except that He is Knowing, Powerful and Living. Most of the negatives that they state are, in fact, not even derived from the Book and the Sunnah, nor are they the result of rational arguments which people who affirm Allah's attributes have developed. Allah has said, "There is nothing like unto Him; and He is All-Hearing and All-Seeing" [42:11]. That verse states an affirmation that contains a negative. It is understood to mean that none other than He is qualified with the attributes of perfection. He is qualified with the attributes which He has mentioned of Himself or that His Prophet (peace be on him) has mentioned of Him. There is nothing similar to Him with respect to His attributes, names or actions that He has mentioned. He also has attributes that none of His creatures know, as His truthful Messenger (peace be on him) said in the supplication for troubled times, "O Allah, I beseech You by all Your names that You have given Yourself, or revealed in Your Book, or taught any of Your creatures, or kept in the Unseen with Yourself, make this Glorious Qur'ān the joy of my heart, the light of my breast, dispel

through it my grief and remove my anxiety and worry."[19] We will return later to a detailed discussion of their wrong view of Allah's attributes, if Allah so wills.

The statement of the author (may Allah have mercy on him), "Nothing is impossible for Him," is not of the type of negative that is disapproved of, because Allah Himself has said, "Allah is never frustrated by anything whatsoever in the heavens and the earth, for He is All-Knowing and All-Powerful" [35:44]. Allah points out, at the end of the verse, what demonstrates why His will can never be frustrated, and that is because He has complete knowledge and power. One is frustrated (or incapacitated) either because he lacks the power or the knowledge to do something. As for Allah, even the minute atoms are in His knowledge and the largest things are within His power. It is evident to rational thought and man's instincts that He has complete and perfect knowledge and power. Therefore, lack of ability has been denied because it is contrary to being powerful. The one who is incapable is not able to be god. May Allah be greatly exalted above that.

(4) There is no god other than He.

As stated earlier, this is the *tawḥīd* to which all prophets called their peoples. To state *tawḥīd* in this manner, that is, to negate (divinity of anyone else) and to affirm (it of only Allah), is to clearly limit divinity to Him. Only affirmation by itself is open to different interpretations. That is why, Allah knows best, when Allah stated, "Your God is one God" He said after it, "There is no god besides Him, the Beneficent, the Merciful" [2:163]. Otherwise, one may get the superficial thought that we have one god and maybe others have other gods, but this possibility is removed by His statement, "There is no god but He."

The author of *Al-Muntakhab* objects to the grammarians' hypothesis concerning the statement, "There is no god but Allah." They say that it means that there is no god in existence except Allah. He says that this denies the existence of any god. But, he says, for pure *tawḥīd*, it is much stronger to deny the essence of another being and not its existence. Therefore, the words must be taken literally and their hypothesis is to be rejected.[20]

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[19] Aḥmad, 1:391, 452; Ibn Ḥibban, 2372; Al-Ḥakīm, 1:509. Its chain is *ṣaḥīḥ*.

[20] 'Abdul-'Azīz Ibn Bāz has commented on this passage, stating that to deny the existence of other gods – beings or objects that people worship – is incorrect, as the Qur'ān affirms it in many places. Hence, the statement, "There is no god but Allah"

Abū 'Abdullah Muḥammad Ibn Abū Al-Fadhl Al-Mursī responded to this objection in *Ray az-Zumān* by saying that this opinion is from one who must not know Arabic. The word *ilah* is in the place of the subject, according to Sibawayh, or it is the noun for the word *lā*,[21] according to others. In either case, there must be a predicate for the subject. Therefore, what he said is incorrect.

As for his statement that if the hypothesis or assumption is not made, it would then mean a denial of the essence, this is not a sound statement. Denying the essence is the same thing as denying the existence. One cannot imagine an essence without an existence. So there is no difference between "no essence" and "no existence". This is the opinion of the Ahl as-Sunnah. On the other hand, the Mu'tazilah affirm an essence without an existence. The words, "except Allah" are in the nominative and they are not the predicate of *lā* nor of the nominative. And he gives evidence for that.

The purpose here is not to enter into a grammatical discussion. It is meant to refute the misconception of the grammarians and to show that the source for their mistake is the Mu'tazilah. Their statement, "in existence", is not constraining because non-existence is nothing. Allah says, "Even as I created you before, when you were nothing" [19:9]. Furthermore, one cannot say that the statement, "There is no other god," is the same as "There is no god except Allah," as the predicate in the former case is one. So I have now stated that misconception and its reply.

(5) He is Eternal, without a beginning, Everlasting, without an end.

Allah has said, "He is the First and the Last" [57:3]. And the Prophet (peace be on him) stated, "O Allah, You are the First, there is nothing before You. You are the Last, there is nothing after You."[22]

As for the author's words, "He is Eternal without a beginning, Everlasting without an end," they explain the meaning of the divine names, the First and the Last.

The knowledge affirming these two attributes is ingrained in human nature, for existing beings must have a beginning in One

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must mean "There is no true god deserving of worship except of Allah."

[21] It was the basic subject of the sentence before the word *lā* was introduced.

[22] Part of a *ḥadīth* recorded by Muslim, Adh-Dhikr, 2713. Also see Abū Dāwūd, *Al-Adab*, 5051; At-Tirmidhī, *Ad-Da'wāt*, 3397; Ibn Mājah, *Ad-Du'ā'*, 3873; Aḥmad, 2:381, 404.

Who necessarily exists by Himself in order to avoid an infinite regress. We witness that animals, plants and minerals on the earth, and clouds, rain, wind and other things in the atmosphere come into existence at one time or another. We also know that these things are not impossible, since the impossible cannot exist; nor do they exist necessarily by themselves, because a necessary being existing by itself can never be non-existent. These things were non-existent and then they came to exist. Hence, they are neither necessary or impossible. And what may both exist and not exist cannot exist by itself. As Allah has said, "Were they created of nothing, or were they themselves the creators?" [52:35]. That is, were they brought into existence by nothing, or did they bring themselves into existence. We know that a contingent being does not bring itself into existence. The possible thing that does not own its existence or non-existence cannot come to exist by itself. It can come into existence only when the cause of its existence is there. Everything that may exist rather than not exist, or may not exist rather than exist, cannot exist or not exist by itself.

If you consider the rational arguments which the scholastic theologians (*mutakallimūn*) and philosophers have advanced, those that are sound simply reiterate the rational arguments which the Qur'ān has stated in very concise and clear words. In fact, the Qur'ān has better and more solid arguments than theirs. Allah has rightly said, "And they bring you no similitude but We reveal to you the Truth and the best explanation (thereof)" [25:33].

We do not say that abstruse premises and arguments are useless. Abstruseness and clarity are relative terms. Something may be abstruse to one but clear to another. In fact, the same person may find something difficult to understand at one time and find the same thing easy to understand at another time. But some people readily grant abstruse premises and dispute clear ones. Again, some feel more pleasure in going through a long process and arguments and then discovering the truth than in getting to it in no time. The belief that the world has been created and the Creator exists by Himself is a part of the natural endowment and instincts of man, even though some people may doubt it and take recourse to rational arguments.

Theologians have mentioned Al-Qadīm as a name of Allah. However, it is not one of the beautiful names. For *qadīm* in the Arabic language in which the Qur'ān was revealed means 'one which is anterior to something else'. That which is old is called *qadim* and what is new is called *ḥadīth*. Qadim has always been used for something that precedes something else, but never in the sense of one preceded by nothing. The Qur'ān states, "Until it (the

moon) returns like the old lower part of a date tree stalk (*al-'urjūn al-qadīm*)" [36:39]. *Al-'urjūn al-qadīm* is what remains until another *'urjūn* comes into being. When the new *'urjūn* appears, the first is called *qadīm*. Another verse states, "When they could not get it, they said, 'This is an old (*qadīm*) falsehood " [46:11]. That is, it is past in time. A third verse reads, "Do you see whom you have been worshiping, you and your fathers before you (*al-aqdamūn*)" [26:75-76]. *Al-aqdam* is the comparative form of *qadīm* and means earlier. For example, one says, "The earlier opinion (*al-qawl al-qadīm*) or the later opinion (*al-qawl al-jadīd*) of Imām Ash-Shāfi'ī." Allah also says, "He will go before (*yaqdimu*) his people on the Day of Judgment and lead them into the Fire" [11:98]. *Q-d-m* is used as both a transitive and an intransitive verb. It is said, "I took both the old and the new (*akhadhtu ma qaduma wa ma hadutha*)." It is also said, "This came before that (*hadhā qadama hadhā*" It is on this basis that the foot is called *qadam*, since it precedes the other parts of the body.

As a name of Allah, Al-Qadīm is well-known among most of the theologians. Many of the Elders and later scholars, including Ibn Ḥazm, objected to it. To be sure, *qadim* implies precedence, and one who precedes everything deserves to be called al-*qadīm*. But Allah's names must mean something praiseworthy and *qadim* does not necessarily mean one who precedes everything, so it cannot be included among His beautiful names. This is why in the revelation one finds the word Al-Awwal ("the First") as it is better than Al-Qadīm as it suggests that whatever comes after Allah turns to Him (*a'il ilayhī*), and is under His control. This sense is not conveyed by al-*qadīm*. Allah has the most beautiful names and not simply names that are beautiful.

(6) He does not perish (*yafna*) or pass away (*yabid*).

This is to affirm that Allah is everlasting. He has said, "All that is on earth will perish, but the countenance of your Lord will abide, full of Majesty, Bounty and Honor" [55:27]. *Fana* (perish) and *bayd* (pass away) are almost synonymous. The Author has put them together for emphasis. And this statement also affirms and emphasizes the statement, "Everlasting without an end" (discussed earlier).

(7) Nothing comes into being except what He wills.

This is a refutation of the Mu'tazilah and Qadarīyyah. They believe that Allah wills every person to have faith, but the infidels will not have faith. This belief is wrong since it clearly goes against the Qur'ān, Sunnah and sound reason. It revolves around the well-known question of *qadr* (predestination) that we will discuss in detail later, if Allah wills.

(The group referred to) are called the Qadarīyyah because they deny *qadr* (predestination). Similarly, the Jabarīyyah ('the determinists) are also called Qadarīyyah since they build their doctrine on the concept of *qadr*. However, the term is usually used for the former group.

The Ahl as-Sunnah believe that Allah does will evil and sin, but only in the sense that He decrees it, not that He approves of it or enjoins it. Indeed, He hates, abhors and prohibits it. This is the view of all of the Elders. They believed that what Allah wills happens and what He does not will does not happen. For this reason, all of the jurists are agreed that if a man takes an oath by saying, "By Allah I will do such-and-such if Allah wills," he does not then break his oath if he does not perform that deed, regardless of whether that action was an obligatory or recommended action. But if he said, "If Allah loves it," then he would be breaking his oath by not performing if it were an obligatory or recommended act.

The scholars of the Ahl as-Sunnah say that the will (*irādah*) of Allah, as it has been used in the Qur'ān, is of two types. One is deterministic, existential and creative (*qadrīyyah, kawnīyyah, khalqīyyah*) and the other is religious, prescriptive and legislative (*dīnīyyah, amrīyyah, shar'īyyah*). Legislative will implies approval and love by Allah (for the act). Existential will, on the other hand, (does not imply that) as it applies to every event that occurs.

Examples of existential will are, "Him whom Allah wills to guide, He opens his heart to Islam, and those whom He wills to leave astray He makes their heart constricted and closed as if they had to climb up to the skies" [6:125]; "Of no profit will be my (ī.e. Noah's) counsel to you, much as I desire to give you good counsel, if Allah wills to let you stray" [11:34]; "But Allah does what He wills" [2:253].

Examples of the religious, prescriptive or legislative will are, "Allah wishes (*yurīdu*) ever facility for you; He does not want (*yurīdu*) to put you to difficulties"[2:185]; "Allah wishes (*yurīdu*) to make clear to you and to show you the ways of those who went before; and He wishes to turn to you (in mercy). And Allah is All-

Knowing and All-Wise" [4:26]; "Allah wishes to turn to you (in mercy), but the wish of those who follow their lust is that you should turn away from Him. Allah wishes to lighten your (burden); for man has been created weak" [4:27-28]; "Allah does not want to put you in difficulty, but (He wants) to purify you and to complete His favor for you" [5:7); "And Allah only wants to remove all abomination from you, members of the family (of the Prophet), and to make you pure and spotless" [33:33].

It is this will which people mean when they say about someone who has performed an evil deed, "He has done something that Allah did not desire," that is, Allah does not love, approve of or command. As for the existential will, it is what Muslims mean when they say, "What Allah wills happens and what He does not will does not happen."

The difference between the two wills is clear. One is concerned with something that Allah does Himself; the other is concerned with something that He wants someone else to do. The first is the Willer's Own act, the second is that of another. This is clear to everyone. Command is concerned with the second, not the first. When Allah commands man to do something, He sometimes likes to help him carry it out, but sometimes He does not, even though He wants him to do it.

If we understand this point properly, the controversy over whether or not Allah's command (*amr*) implies that His will (*irādah*) fades. Allah has sent down a Shari'ah through His prophets, which secures happiness and saves mankind from misery. But it is only a part of mankind whose acts He wills to create; and when He wills, He creates their acts and makes them their doers. There are others whose acts He does not will to create. It is clear that His creation of their acts, or the acts of other creatures, is something different from His enjoining upon them the laws that will secure their well-being and save them from misery.

When, for example, He commands Pharaoh, Abū Lahab, or anyone else to believe in Him, He explains to them what course will be beneficial and what course will be harmful to them. But this does not mean that He will also help them carry out His commands. On the contrary, when He creates any act of theirs or helps them to effect it, it may involve something harmful to them. To be sure, all that He creates has a purpose. But it is not necessary that what He has commanded man to do and what is good for them when they carry it out should also be good for Allah when He Himself does it or makes them do it. The two aspects, the creative and the prescriptive, are not one.

It happens that sometimes we ask a person to do or not to do something and our intention is nothing but to do him good, which we even explain to him; nevertheless we do not want to help him do it. It is not necessary that if it is good for me to advise someone to do something for his own good it would also be good for me to help him do it. It may even be in my best interest to oppose the act. The two aspects are quite different: to advise someone sincerely to do something is one thing, and to do it oneself is another. Therefore, if it is possible to distinguish between these two aspects in the human context, it is much more possible and correct to make that distinction in the divine context.

The Qadarīyyah use the example of one person commanding another to do something. According to them, the commander must do the things that will lead the commanded to do the act. For example, he should greet him with a smiling face, offer him a chair and so on. But they fail to realize that there are two possibilities here. In one case, the benefit of the work may go to the one who commanded, such as when a king commands his army to wage a war which consolidates his power, when a master asks his servant to look after his property, or when one partner asks the other partner to do what benefits both, and so on. In the second case, the commander realizes that in helping the commanded there is some benefit for himself also. An example of this nature is the Islamic concept of "commanding good" or helping one's brother in righteous and pious deeds. In that case, the person knows that Allah will reward him for helping another obey Allah, as Allah helps a Muslim as long as that Muslim is helping his brother.

But it is also possible for the commander to command someone to do something that is beneficial for the commanded and which does not benefit the commander upon its action, such is the case with the counsel of an advisor. It is also possible that if he helps the commanded, it will not be to his benefit. It may even be possible that the commanded action may be harmful for the commander, as was the case in the story found in the Qur'ān where a man came from the far end of a city to tell Moses, "The chiefs are taking counsel together about you to slay you. So go away. I do give you only sincere advice" [28:20]. It was in his interest to command Moses to leave, though it was not in his interest to help him do so, for if he had helped Moses escape, his people would have punished him. In fact, one could produce many examples of this nature.

If Allah commands what is beneficial for men, it does not follow necessarily that He should also help them do it. The Qadarīyyah actually believe that Allah cannot help anyone perform any act. However, if one believes that the acts of Allah have wisdom to

them, which is the case even if we are not aware of the wisdom, it does not follow that it should also be wise for Allah to help people do what He commands them to do. On the contrary, His wisdom may determine that it may be best not to help the one He commanded. If we can imagine that one man may ask another man to do something just because he thinks it would be good for the latter, although it would not be good for the former to help him, then that is even more possible and reasonable in the case of Allah.

In short, if it is correct that a wise man can ask someone to do something but not help him in doing that deed, it is all the more proper for Allah, according to His wisdom, to do the same. If He commands someone to do something and helps him carry it out, He will be both creating it and commanding it. It will be the object of His creative will as well as His prescriptive will. But if He does not help in the performance of the act, it will only be the object of His command, not of creation. It will be wise not to create it; it may even be wiser to create its opposite.

Obviously, the creation of one of the contraries rules out the creation of the other. For example, if He creates an illness that leads a person to submit to Him, repent for his sins and seek His forgiveness, soften his heart, lower his vanity, do away with his arrogance and rebellion, that would be in contradiction to the creation of health which would not lead to all the good consequences just mentioned. Similarly, the injustice that an oppressor creates may often lead to similar results for the oppressed as those mentioned above for the sick. Such results are not produced by justice when it is created, even though it is (apparently) in man's best interest to have justice.

It is difficult or impossible for man to understand the wisdom that lies behind Allah's creation or His command. The Qadarīyyah attempted to understand it in an incorrect manner by conceiving Allah on human patterns. This resulted in denying that His actions may have some purpose that can be attributed to Him.

(8) No imagination (*wahm*) can conceive of Him, and no understanding (*fahm*) can fathom Him.

Allah has said, "They comprehend Him not in knowledge" [20:110]. In *Aṣ-Ṣiḥāḥ*[23] it is stated that the meaning of *tawahhum* means 'to imagine or surmise', while *fahm* means 'to know, to

[23]The author of the *Ṣiḥāḥ* is Abū Naṣr Ismā'īl Ibn Ḥammad At-Turkī Al-Jawharī (d. 393/1003].

understand'. What is meant here by the author, Aṭ-Ṭaḥāwī, is that neither can imagination conceive of Him nor can understanding fathom Him. Some say that *wahm* means to envisage a thing, such as thinking that it is like such-and-such. *Fahm* (understanding), on the other hand, is what is comprehended through reason. No one knows what Allah is like, except Allah Himself. We know Him through His attributes. (We know) that He is Unique, Absolute, He begets not, nor was He begotten, and there is none like unto Him. (Similarly we know that He is) "Allah: there is no god but He. He is the Living, the Self-Subsisting and All-Sustaining. No slumber nor sleep overtakes Him. His are all the things in the heavens and on earth" [2:255]. And, "Allah is He, besides whom there is no other god, the Sovereign, the Holy One, the Source of Peace, the Guardian of the Path, the Preserver of Safety, Exalted in Might, the Irresistible, the Supreme. Glory be to Allah. High is He above the partners they attribute to Him. He is Allah, the Creator, the One Who Evolves All Things, the Giver of Forms. To Him belong the most beautiful names. Whatever is in the heavens and on earth declares His praise and glory, and He is Exalted in Might and Wise" [59:23-24].

(9) He does not resemble mankind.

This is a refutation of the view that conceives of the Creator in a fashion analogous to the created. Allah has Himself said, "There is nothing like unto Him; and He is All-Hearing and All-Seeing" [42:11]. This verse does not mean to deny Allah's attributes, as the heretics argue. Abū Ḥanīfah stated in *Al-Fiqh al-Akbar*, "Allah is not like any of His creatures, nor is any creature like Him... His attributes are different from their attributes. He knows but not as we know; He acts but not as we act; and He sees but not as we see."[24] Nu'aym Ibn Ḥammad stated, "Whoever likens Allah to any of His created beings is an infidel. Whoever negates the attributes which Allah has affirmed of Himself is also an infidel. There is no anthropomorphism (*tashbīh*) in the attributes which Allah has affirmed of Himself or which His Messenger has affirmed of Him." Isḥāq Ibn Rahawayh[25] stated, "Whoever describes Allah and likens His attributes with the attributes of any one of His creatures has denied (or disbelieved in) Allah, the Most High."

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[24]See *Al-Fiqh al-Akbar* with commentary by Mullah 'Alī Al-Qarī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyyah, 1404/1984), p. 24.

[25]For the words quoted here, see Al-Lalkā'ī, *Sharḥ as-Sunnah*, entry 937.

He also said, "The mark of Jahm and his followers is their false claim of anthropomorphism against the Ahl as-Sunnah. In fact, they are the ones who deny the divine attributes." Many of the leaders of the Elders have stated that the mark of the Jahmīyyah is their calling the Ahl as-Sunnah anthropomorphists. Actually, there has not been anyone who negated any of the attributes of Allah except that he called those who affirmed such attributes anthropomorphists. The Qaramatah and philosophers who completely deny Allah's attributes, and say that we cannot call Him Knowing or Powerful, dub anyone who calls Allah by these names an anthropomorphist. In their opinion, participation in a name is also participation in its connotation. And there are also the extreme Jahmis. They affirm Allah's names but they say they are simply metaphors. According to them, if anyone says that Allah is really Knowing or Powerful, he is an anthropomorphist.

Whoever denies Allah's attributes, and claims that He has no knowledge, power, speech or live, will call anyone who affirms these aspects of Allah anthropomorphists (*mushābbihūn*) or corporealists (*mujassimūn*). That is, the books of the Jahmīyyah, Mu'tazilah and Rafiḍah, and all others who negate Allah's attributes always reiterate the charge that those who affirm said attributes are anthropomorphists and corporealists. It is written in their books that among the corporealists are "the people called the Mālikīs who follow Mālik Ibn 'Anas and the people called the Shāfi'īs who follow Muḥammad Ibn Idrīs." Even their commentators on the Qur'ān, such as 'Abdul-Jabbār and Az-Zamakhsharī, have labeled all those who affirm Allah's attributes or believe in seeing Him as anthropomorphists and corporealists. These terms became very common in later works of such groups.

However, when the scholars of the Ahl as-Sunnah use such terms they do not imply that negating *tashbīh* means negating the attributes of Allah. They do not use that term for the people who affirm Allah's attributes. Rather, what they say is that there can be no comparison between Allah's names, attributes and actions and those of His creatures. In the quote above from Abū Ḥanīfah, he stated that His knowledge is not like our knowledge, His power is not like our power, and His sight is not like our sight. That is the meaning of the verse, "Nothing is like unto Him; and He is All-Hearing and All-Seeing" [42:11]. What is negated is likeness and what is affirmed is the attribute.

The author, Aṭ-Ṭaḥāwī, himself later mentions the point that negation of likeness does not necessarily mean the negation of divine attributes.

To clarify the matter further, in theology, it is not allowable to use analogical arguments where the major and the minor terms are equivalent, or syllogistic arguments where all the terms are of the same category. Since nothing is like Allah, He cannot be conceived as the analogy of anything; nor can He be brought with another under one category and made the subject of a syllogism. This is the reason the theologians and philosophers who employ these arguments do not arrive at any certain truth: their propositions contradict each other. And when they themselves see that their arguments are equally inconclusive, they end in stupefaction and confusion.

The argument that should be employed here is the argument of priority (*qiyās al-awla*), whether its form is syllogistic or analogical. Allah states, "To Allah applies the highest similitude" [16:60]. The argument of priority means that if a contingent or possible being is qualified with an excellence which is flawless and positive, unaffected by any non-being, then the Eternal and Necessary Being should be all the more qualified with it. And if a species of that excellence is found in the created beings, it must be derived from God, its Creator, Lord and Controller, Who deserves its attribute more than anyone else. On the other hand, when an imperfection or a defect, which is the want of excellence, is negated of any created being, possible or contingent, it must be negated of Allah in the first place.[26]

It is very strange that the extreme negators of divine attributes use the above verse [42:11] to deny Allah's attributes and names. They state that the Necessary Being cannot have this or that attribute. They also state that the foundation of philosophy is to resemble Allah as much as possible. For them, that is the consummation of human perfection. Some scholars who use the same phrase sympathize with them and they recount that the Prophet (peace be on him) said, "Cultivate in yourselves the virtues of Allah."[27] But if they deny the attributes, what attributes are people supposed to cultivate? Since Allah is not like any created being, nothing created is like Allah. However, this fact is denied by the Christians, incarnationists and monists, may the curse of Allah be upon them.

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[26]For a discussion of this point, see Ibn Al-Qayyīm, *As-Sawā'iq al-Murṣalāh 'alā al-Jahmīyyah wa al-Mu'attilah*, abridged by Muḥammad Ibn Al-Musalī (Beirut: Dār an-Nadwa, 1405/1984), vol. 1, pp. 215-217.

[27]This *ḥadīth* is not found in any collection of *ḥadīth* and is not to be ascribed to the Prophet (peace be on him].

Since the denial of Allah's likeness to created beings implies the denial of likeness of created beings to Allah, the author has contented himself with saying that Allah does not resemble human beings (*al-anām*). *Anām* literally means mankind. Some say that it includes all of creation, while others say it refers to all living creatures. Some say it specifically refers to human beings and jinns. But the apparent meaning of the verse, "He has made the earth for *al-anām*" [55:10] is stronger support for the first opinion than the other opinions. And Allah knows best.

(10) He is Living and will never die. He is All-Sustaining and never sleeps.

Allah has said, "Allah: there is no god but He, the Living, the All-Sustaining. Slumber does not overtake Him, nor does sleep" [2:255]. To negate slumber and sleep is to affirm perfect life and all-sustaining power. Allah also says, "*Alif Lām Mīm*. Allah: there is no god besides Him, the Living and the All-Sustaining" [3:1-3]; "And faces humble themselves before the Living, the All-Sustaining" [20:111]; "Put your trust in Him Who lives and dies not, and celebrate His praise" [25:58]; and, "He is the Living One, there is no god but He" [40:65]. And the Prophet (peace be on him) said, "Allah does not sleep, and it does not behoove Him to sleep."[28]

Having negated resemblance (*tashbīh*), the author points out what distinguishes Allah from His creatures. The first distinction is that Allah is Living and will never die. The quality of everlasting life is something exclusive to Him and does not pertain to His creatures; they all will die. A second distinction is that He sustains everything and never sleeps or tires. This characteristic distinguishes Him from His creatures, as His creatures do sleep and get tired. The words of the author imply that the negation of resemblance does not amount to the negation of His attributes. On the contrary, Allah is qualified with all the attributes of perfection, as He is the most perfect Being.

The everlasting life is not like the transitory life. That is why the life of this world is pleasure, play and amusement. "But the home in the Hereafter will be the life indeed" [29:64]. The worldly life is like a sleep and the life of the Hereafter is like awakening. But one cannot say that the life of the Hereafter is the perfect life, for it is the life of a created being. Rather we say that the Living One is He

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[28]This is part of a *ḥadīth* recorded by Muslim, *Al-Īmān*, 179, 293. Also see Ibn Mājah, *Al-Muqaddimah*, 195, 196; Ibn Ḥibban, 266; Aḥmad, 4:395, 401 and 405.

Whose life is inseparable from His essence; He has it by Himself. And it is He Who will grant eternal life to created beings. That is, life is eternal because Allah makes it eternal, not because eternity is a quality that is necessary to it. This differs from the life of the Lord, as do all of His attributes (differ from the attributes of the created), which is essential to Him. Hence His attributes are as they behoove Him, and the attributes of the creatures are as they behoove them.

These two names of Allah, Al-Ḥayy and Al-Qayyūm, are mentioned together three times in the Qur'ān, as was quoted above. They are among the greatest names of Allah. Some even say that they are (together) the greatest and most majestic name of Allah. (They are so considered) because they suggest the loftiest and most perfect excellence of Allah. Al-Qayyūm signifies eternity and everlastingness, which Al-Qadīm (discussed earlier) does not. It also signifies that He exists by Himself. That is what is meant by the term "the Necessary Being". Al-Qayyūm is more intensive than Al-Qayyām because the use of the letter *wāw* is stronger, or more forceful, than the letter *alif*. Furthermore, Al-Qayyūm signifies that He sustains Himself, as the scholars of *tafsīr* and language agree. That is actually known by necessity.

Does it also imply that He sustains other things and takes care of them? On this point there are two opinions. The strongest opinion is that it also implies that. It also implies that He always sustains the creation and His sustaining is perfect, since it is in the intensive form. He is there eternally, never fails to exist, never loses sight of things for a moment, never suffers loss or want, nor does He die or perish. He is the Eternal, the Everlasting, Who will always be and will always have the most perfect attributes.

Al-Qayyūm is joined with Al-Ḥayy. This also necessitates that Allah is qualified with all the perfect attributes. It also implies that He has those attributes from eternity and will have them forever without their undergoing any diminution or reduction. That is why the verse, "Allah: there is no god but He, the Living (Al-Ḥayy), the Necessary and All-Sustaining Being (Al-Qayyūm)" [2:255], is the greatest verse in the Qur'ān, as is mentioned in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* from the Prophet (peace be on him).[29]

All of the beautiful names of Allah revolve around these two names, and their meanings revert to these two. Life encompasses and necessitates all of the perfect attributes of Allah. This is true

[29]Muslim, *Salāt al-Musāfirīn wa Qasriha*, 810; Abū Dāwūd, *Aṣ-Ṣalāh*, 1460; Aḥmad, 5:142.

because the want of an attribute is due to the weakness of a life. But Allah's life is the most complete and perfect life. Hence, it is qualified with the best attributes free from any defects. Al-Qayyūm, on the other hand, implies Allah's self-sufficiency, freedom from all wants, and His perfect power. He sustains Himself and sustains all others. Everything depends on Him and He depends on none. Hence, these two names imply all the perfect names of Allah.

(11) He creates without being in need to do so, and provides for His creation without any trouble (b*ilā* mu'unah).

Allah says in the Qur'ān, "I have only created jinns and mankind that they may serve and worship Me. No sustenance do I require from them, nor do I require that they should feed Me. For it is Allah Who gives all sustenance, Lord of Power and Unbreakable Might" [51:56-58]. He also says, "Mankind, it is you that have need of Allah. But Allah is free from all wants, worthy of praise" [35:15]. Another verse reads, "Allah is free from all wants, and it is you that are needy" [47:38]. Finally, Allah also says, "Say (Muḥammad): Will I take for my protector any other than Allah, the Maker of the heavens and the earth? And He it is Who feeds but is not fed" [6:14].

Abū Dharr reported that the Prophet (peace be on him) said (in a narration from His Lord), "My servants! If all of you, the first and last, men and jinns, were as pious as the most pious soul among you, that would add nothing to My Kingdom. My servants! If all of you, first and last, men and jinns, were as wicked as the most wicked among you, that would not reduce My Kingdom in the least. My servants! If all of you, first and last, men and jinns, were to gather in one place and ask of Me, and I were to grant everyone his request, that would not decrease what I have any more than a needle decreases the water when it is dipped into the sea..." [recorded by Muslim].[30]

The author's statement, *bilā mu'unah* means without any burden or difficulty.

[30]Muslim, 2577; At-Tirmidhī, *Ṣifat al-Qiyāmah*, 2497; Ibn Mājah, *Az-Zuhd*, 4257; Aḥmad 5:154, 160, 177.

(12) He causes death without fear, and He resurrects (the dead) with no effort.

Contrary to the belief of the philosophers and their followers, death is an existential attribute. Allah says, "He Who created death and life so that He might try which of you is best in deed" [67:2]. It is plain that what is nothing cannot be said to have been created. A *ḥadīth* states, "Death will be brought on the Day of Judgment in the form of a beautiful ram. And it will be slaughtered between Paradise and Hell."[31] If death were an accident (*aradh*), Allah could make it a substance or physical body. There are other instances, too, of such metamorphosis or substantiation. For example, a *ḥadīth* says that "[g]ood deeds will come to their doer in the form of a handsome young man, and bad deeds will appear in the ugliest form."[32] Another *ḥadīth* states about (unmindful reading of) the Qur'ān, that it will come in the form of a youth, emaciated and pale.[33] And about human deeds, it is said that they "will be weighed in the balance."[34] It is plain that things that are weighed are tangible objects, not accidents. In yet another *ḥadīth* it states that "the two *sūrahs*, Al-Baqarah and Āli-'Imrān, will, on the Day of Judgment, form a shade over their reader, as if they were two clouds or two flocks of birds spreading their wings in the air."[35] And also in the *Ṣaḥīḥ*, it states, "The deeds of human beings go up into Heaven."[36]

As for the discussion of resurrection, it will be taken up later.

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[31] Al-Bukhārī, 4370; Muslim, *Al-Jannah wa Ṣifat Na'imihā*, 2849; At-Tirmidhī, At-*Tafsīr*, 3155; Ad-Dārimī, *Ar-Riqāq*, 2814; Aḥmad, 2:377, 423, 513.

[32] Part of a *ḥadīth* in Aḥmad, 4:287, 295, 296; Al-Ḥakīm, 1:37, 40. Its chain is *ḥasan*.

[33] Part of a *ḥadīth* in Aḥmad, 5:348, 352; Ibn Mājah, *Al-Adab*, 3781; Al-Ḥakīm, 1:256. According to Al-Arnawūṭ, its chain is *ḥasan*.

[34] Part of a *ḥadīth* in Aḥmad, 2:213; At-Tirmidhī, *Al-Īmān*, 2641; Ibn Mājah, *Az-Zuhd*, 4300; Al-Ḥakīm, *Al-Īmān*, 1:6; Ibn Ḥibban, *Az-Zuhd*, 2523. It is *ṣaḥīḥ*.

[35] Aḥmad, 5:348, 352; Ad-Dārimī, 2:450, 451; Muslim, *Ṣalāt al-Musafirīn*, 804.

[36] Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣifat as-Salāt*, 799; Abū Dāwūd, *Aṣ-Ṣalāh*, 770; At-Tirmidhī, *Aṣ-Ṣalāh*, 404; An-Nasā'ī, *Al-Iftitāḥ*, 2:196; Aḥmad, 4:355, 356.

(13) He has always existed with His attributes, even before the creation of the world, which did not add anything to His attributes that were not already present. Just as He is Eternal along with His attributes, so He is Everlasting along with them.

Allah is qualified from eternity with attributes of perfection, both attributes of essence and action. It is not permissible to believe that Allah acquired an attribute after He did not have it, because His attributes are attributes of perfection, hence their absence would imply imperfection. It is not conceivable that He was first imperfect and then He became perfect. However, this is not cause to deny the active or voluntary attributes of Allah, such as creating and forming, causing life and death, expanding, contracting and folding, ascending the Throne, coming and descending, being happy or angry, and other similar attributes that He Himself or His Prophet (peace be on him) have mentioned of Him, regardless of whether we comprehend their meanings or not.

We do not delve into the meaning of these attributes, nor do we interpret them according to our whims. But we are aware of their basic meanings. As Imām Mālik was asked about the verse, "He then settled (*istiwā*) Himself on the Throne" [7:54], "How did He settle Himself on the Throne?" He answered, "*Istiwā* is known to us, but its modality is not known." We believe that the divine attributes are eternal even though what they refer to may happen at one time and not at another. For example, in the *ḥadīth* on intercession, the Prophet (peace be on him) stated, "Allah today became so angry as He has never been before and will never be again."[37] The possibility of such acts, in that manner, cannot be ruled out. However, they are not to be generalized. We cannot say that He came to be such-and-such after He was not such. One does not say of a person, if he speaks today and was also speaking yesterday, "He has now started speaking." It also cannot be said that perhaps before he could not speak because he was a baby or mute, and then, when he spoke, one says, "Now he has spoken." The one who is silent not due to any obstacle to speech is still called a speaker because he has the ability to speak, that is, he may speak if and when he wishes. When he actually speaks, he is called a speaker-in-action. Similarly, a scribe, when he is writing, is a

[37]Part of a long *ḥadīth* on intercession in Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Anbiyā'*, 3340, 3361; Muslim, *Al-Īmān*, 194; At-Tirmidhī, *Ṣifat al-Qiyāmah*, 2436; Aḥmad, 2:435, 436.

writer-in-action but that does not mean that he is no longer a scribe when he is not actually writing.

The concept of things occurring with respect to the Lord has been denied by the blameworthy type of theology. But in the Qur'ān and Sunnah it is neither affirmed nor denied. There is ambiguity surrounding this question. If one means by such negation that nothing created happens to Allah or that He does not acquire an attribute He did not have before, then the negation is correct. But if one intends by that to deny the volitional attributes and imply that He does not do what He wills, does not speak what and when He wills, He is not pleased or angered in His own unique way, or denies the attributes that He has used for Himself of descending, mounting and coming in a way befitting His Majesty, then this negation is wrong.

When the exponents of the condemned dialectics deny without qualification that things may happen to Allah, an ordinary Muslim accepts their argument because he believes that they are denying something that is not becoming to Allah. But if the Muslim accepts that negation then he must, as a consequence, also negate the volitional and active attributes of Allah and consider these non-essential to Him. He is led to this conclusion because he accepted the first premise of negation without actually realizing the details of that premise. Had he analyzed it, he would have not fallen prey to them.

The question of whether the attributes are over and above (*za'id 'ala*) the essence is likewise ambiguous. The word "other" (*ghayr*) is also ambiguous. It can refer to what is not the essence itself, or it can refer to what can be separated from the essence. This is why the scholars of the Ahl as-Sunnah neither say without qualification that the attributes of Allah are other than Allah, nor do they say without qualification that they are not other than Allah. For to say without qualification that they are other may suggest that they are separate from His essence; similarly, to say that they are not other without qualifying that statement may suggest that they are the same as His essence. Since the word "other" (*ghayr*) is ambiguous, one should avoid using it without defining its exact sense. For if one means by it that there is an essence existing by itself separate from the attributes which are over and above it, that is not correct.

If, though, it is used to mean that the attributes are over and above the essence in the sense that we understand by the essence something that we do not understand by an attribute, then it is correct. But it is not the case that there is no essence existing out there divested of all attributes. In reality, the essence qualified by the attributes of perfection essential to it is inseparable from them. It is only in the mind that the two are separated from each other and that

the two are imagined to exist by themselves. In reality, there is no essence without an attribute; this is simply not possible. Even if there were no attribute present except that of existence, even that would not have been separate from the essence. But in one's mind they can be conceived of as an essence and an existence, each separate from the other, though in reality they cannot be and are not separate.

Some of them say that the attribute is neither one with the essence nor different from it. This statement is correct in one sense: the attribute is neither the essence which it qualifies and which the mind assumes to be without attributes, nor is it separate from the essence; rather, the essence, along with the attributes that qualify it, are one thing, single and non-multiple.

Therefore, one must distinguish between the statement, "The attributes are aside from the essence" and the statement, "The attributes of Allah are other than Allah." The second statement is erroneous because when one mentions Allah, this includes His attributes, as opposed to when one mentions His essence, as this does not include His attributes. What is meant is that the attributes are over and above what is affirmed concerning the essence. Allah is the essence that is qualified by His ever-present attributes. That is why the author said, "He has always existed with His attributes." Note that he did not say, "He and His attributes are always existing" because in this case the conjunction would permit the possibility of difference between them. Similarly, while debating the Jahmīyyah, Imām Aḥmad said, "We do not say, 'Allah and His knowledge, Allah and His power, Allah and His light; we say, 'Allah with His knowledge, His power and His light. He is the only God, Glorified and Exalted be He."

When you say, "I seek refuge in Allah," you are seeking refuge in the holy essence that has the perfect, constant, holy attributes that are absolutely inseparable from Him. But when you say, "I seek refuge in the might of Allah," you are seeking refuge in one of the attributes of Allah, and you, furthermore, are not seeking refuge in anything other than Allah.

This meaning is understood from the term essence (*dhat*). Originally the term was not used except as a noun in status constructus. For example, one would say, "*dhat wujud*," ('one having existence'), "*dhat 'izzah*"('one of power'), "*dhat 'ilm*" ('one of knowledge'), and so on. Hence, dhat means 'one having such-and-such'. Actually, dhat is the feminine of *dhu* ('one having such-and-such'). This is the original meaning of the word. Therefore, it is clear that dhat cannot at all be conceived without an attribute, even

though the mind can imagine an essence stripped of all attributes, as it can also imagine an impossibility.

This fact lies behind various invocations of the Prophet (peace be on him) such as, "I seek the protection of Allah's glory and power from the evil that I am facing or might face."[38] And, "I seek protection in Allah's perfect words from the evil of things He created."[39] Obviously, the Prophet (peace be on him) never sought the protection of anything other than Allah. Similarly, the Prophet (peace be on him) said, "O Allah, I seek protection in Your pleasure against Your displeasure, and in Your forgiveness against Your punishment, and in Yourself from You."[40] Also, "We seek refuge in Your Majesty against assassination from behind."[41] And, "I seek refuge in the radiance of Your faith which lightens up all darkness."[42]

There is also their question, "Is a name the essence of the named or not?" Many people have erred on this question. The correct view is that the name sometimes means the object named and sometimes it means the word that denotes the object. For example, when you say, "Allah says such-and-such," "Allah hears him who praises Him," and so on, you mean the named Himself. But when you say, "Allah is an Arabic name, Ar-Raḥmān is an Arabic name, Ar-Raḥmān is one of the beautiful names," and so on, you are referring to the name itself and not the named. Therefore, one cannot say without qualification that the name is other than the named. For the word "other", again, is ambiguous. If you mean to say that the word

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[38]Part of a *ḥadīth* in Muslim, *As-Salām*, 2202; Abū Dāwūd, *Aṭ-Ṭibb*, 3891; At-Tirmidhī, *Aṭ-Ṭibb*, 2081; Ibn Mājah, *Aṭ-Ṭibb*, 3522; Aḥmad, 4:217.

[39]Part of a *ḥadīth* in Muslim, *Adh-Dhikr wa ad-Du'ā'* 2708; At-Tirmidhī, *Ad-Da'wāt*, 3437; Aḥmad, 6:377, 409.

[40]Part of a *ḥadīth* in Abū Dāwūd, *Aṣ-Ṣalāh*, 1427; At-Tirmidhī, *Ad-Da'wāt*, 3561; An-Nasā'ī, *Aṣ-Ṣalāh*, 3:248; Ibn Mājah, *Iqāmat aṣ-Ṣalāh*, 1179; Aḥmad, 1:96, 118, 150; Muslim, 486.

[41]Part of a *ḥadīth* in Aḥmad, 2:125; Abū Dāwūd, *Al-Adab*, 5074; An-Nasā'ī, *Isti'ādhah*, 8:282; Ibn Mājah, *Ad-Du'ā'*, 3871. Its chain is *ṣaḥīḥ*.

[42]This has been recorded by Ibn Hishām, *As-Sīrah an-Nabawīyyah*, ed. by Muṣṭafa As-Saqqa and others (Cairo: Maktabah Muṣṭafa Al-Ḥalabī, 1375/1955), vol. 1, p. 420; Ibn Jarīr Aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Jamī al-Bayān 'an Tawīl Ayī al-Qur'ān* (Cairo: Maṭba'at Muṣṭafa Al-Babī Al-Ḥalabī and Sons, 1388/1968), 3rd edition, vol. I, p. 80; Az-Zurqānī, in his *Commentary on Al-Mawāhib al-Ladunnīyyah of Al-Qastalānī* (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah, 1393/1973), 3rd edition, vol. 1, p. 305; and At-Ṭabarānī, *Al-Mu'jam al-Kabīr*, *Ad-Du'ā'*, on the authority of 'Abdullah Ibn Ja'far, with the remark that it is a *mursal ḥadīth*. In his footnotes to the *Commentary*, Al-Albānī called this *ḥadīth* weak.

is not the same as what it means, that is true. But if you mean to say that Allah was in the beginning without names, and then created names for Himself or His creatures gave Him names of their making, that is a completely false and blasphemous view of Allah's names.[43]

The author has alluded to this point in these words, "He is qualified with His attributes eternally from before the creation of the world." He refutes the view of the Mu'tazilah, Jahmīyyah and those Shī'ah who are in agreement with them. These people claim that Allah did not at first have the power to act or to speak, and then He came to have such powers. Action and speech became possible after it was first impossible. The impossible changed into the possible.

Ibn Kullāb, Al-Ash'arī and their followers put the point somewhat differently. They say that action became possible for Him after it was impossible from Him. As for speech, in their view, it is not related to divine will and power; it is one single speech necessary to His essence.

The source of this view is the Jahmīyyah. They said that events cannot be eternal. They have to have a beginning, for an infinite regress of events is impossible. Therefore, they claim, it is impossible for Allah to have been acting or speaking of His free will since eternity. Furthermore, it was impossible for Him to have the power to do that because power to do something impossible is impossible. But this is wrong. This implies that the world is not contingent, even though it is in fact contingent. What comes into existence after it did not exist must be possible. And possibility is not confined to any particular time, because whatever time we think of, the existence of that possible thing in that time cannot be ruled out. Hence, there is no particular time for the possible to begin or to take place; it is eternally possible. Therefore, Allah must have always had the power from eternity to bring the possible into existence. It also follows that a series of events in the past does not have to have a beginning at a point.

The Jahmīyyah and those who agree with them say that they do not accept the possibility of a series of events that has no beginning. They concede it only on the condition that the series is preceded by non-being. In their view, events as a class cannot be eternal; as a class they have to be contingent, not eternal. However, they do not believe that the events have to come into existence at a particular time. In short, they allow the possibility of a beginning-less series

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[43]For a detailed discussion of this point, see Ibn Taymīyyah, *Majmū' al-Fatāwa*, vol. 6, pp. 185-212.

of events on the condition that they are preceded by non-being. But they do not uphold that possibility regarding a class of events.

We would comment on this view as follows. You say that events as a class should have a beginning. Now, if you believe that things can become possible after they were not possible, that there is no particular time for the realization of this possibility, and that for any time we may think of, it can happen before that, then you are forced to admit that this possibility is eternally there; otherwise you will have to say that the impossible can become possible without anything happening there or any cause coming into existence. We know that the transformation of a contingency, as such, or of the events as a class, or of things of a class, or of such similar things, from impossibility to possibility – that they become possible after they were impossible – without any cause happening, is completely ruled out by reason. It would mean that the class that was essentially impossible has become essentially possible, for in your view events as a class become possible after being impossible.

Furthermore, this transformation is not tied to any particular time, because whatever time we may think of, it can happen before that. It follows that the transformation was always possible; hence, the impossible was always possible. This is a more far-reaching claim than our view that the contingent is eternally possible. This means that they have to admit to more than what we were trying to make them admit and which is what they were trying to avoid. One can imagine (our view, which states) that a contingent thing is possible and that this possibility is eternal. But one cannot imagine (the conclusion they are forced into, which states) that an impossible is possible. That, obviously, is a contradiction. That being so, what can one say about the proposition that the impossible has always been possible? This topic has been further elaborated in its proper places.

In sum, concerning the question of whether events as a class are unending in the future as well as in the past, or in neither, or only in the future, or only in the past, there are three views among Muslim and non-Muslim thinkers. The most untenable view is that it is impossible to be unending, either in the future or in the past; this is the view of Jahm Ibn Ṣafwān and Abū Al-Hudhayl Al-'Allaf. The second view states that it can be unending only in the future and not in the past. This is held by many theologians belong to various schools, such as the Jahmīyyah, Mu'tazilah, Karramīyyah, Ash'arīs and Shī'īs, as well as some jurists and other scholars. The third view is that it can be unending in both the past and the future. This is the view of the leading scholars of *ḥadīth*. In fact, this is one of the more important doctrines. No one has stated the fourth

possibility, that it can be unending only in the past but not in the future.

There is no doubt that the majority of the world from all different peoples say that everything other than Allah is created. Everything came into being after it was not existing. That is what all the messengers and their followers of Muslims, Jews, Christians and others believe in. It is known, by natural instinct, that it is impossible for the act to co-exist with the Actor from eternity to eternity. Since the existence of an endless series of events in the future is not inconsistent with Allah being the Last, without anything coming after Him, the existence of an endless series of events in the past is not inconsistent with Allah being the First, without anything going before Him. Allah is always there doing and speaking whatever and whenever He wills from eternity to eternity. Allah says in the Qur'ān, "Thus Allah does whatever He wills" [3:40]; "But Allah does whatever He likes" [2:253]; "He is the Lord of the Glorious Throne, and He does whatever He pleases" [85:15-16]; "And if all the trees on earth were pens, and oceans were ink, with seven oceans behind it to add to its supply, yet the words of Allah would not be exhausted (in the writing)" [31:27]; "Say: If the oceans were ink wherewith to write out the words of my Lord, sooner would the ocean be exhausted than would the words of my Lord, even if we added another ocean like it for its aid" [18:109].

What is affirmed here is the perfection that can possibly exist. Hence, if the class of acts is everlasting, it is possible and certainly more perfect that He precedes every individual thing such that no part of the world can co-exist with Him in any respect. As for permanence of action, it is also perfection. Since action is an attribute of perfection, its permanence will mean permanence of perfection.

People say that regress (as in "infinite regression") is an ambiguous term, it is neither affirmed nor denied in the Book of Allah or in the Sunnah,. hence, we are not bound to adhere to the term. However, regress is of three types: necessary, impossible and possible. In the case of infinite regression of causes, this is impossible, for we cannot imagine that one cause derives its causative power from another cause, and that from a third cause and so on ad infinitum. The example of necessary regress is divine action in the future. Both reason and revelation affirm that whenever something in the use of the people of Paradise ends, Allah will create another and then a third, and so on, ad infinitum. The same is true about Allah's action in the past, for every act of His is preceded by another act. For example, He has been speaking since eternity whenever He pleased; obviously, His attribute of speech is not

something that has happened to Him after a time. The same is true of the other acts that are essential to His life, for every living being acts and the difference between the living and dead is action. That is why a number of the Elders stated, "Living is acting." 'Uthmān Ibn Sa'•d said, "Every living thing acts. And our Lord has never been for a moment imperfect, without speaking, willing or acting."

An example of possible regress is the things that Allah does, and this regress may be both in the past and in the future. Since Allah is Living, Powerful, Willing and Speaking from eternity – all this being part of His essence – He would be doing one thing or another according to these attributes. Action is more complete than inaction. However, this does not necessitate that objects co-exist with Him. Allah precedes every single object He creates and is not preceded by any of them. Every created object has something first that went before it, except the Creator, Who has no first before Him. He alone is the Creator and everything else is created and comes into existence after a time when it was non-existent.

Reason rejects every other view. All those who believe that Allah has power to act from eternity must either believe that it was possible for Him to act from eternity or that He has been acting from eternity. Any other view would be inconsistent with their faith. For example, there is the view that although Allah has power to act from eternity, action itself is inconceivable, and were He to will it, it would not happen. Another view is that He could not at all will it, even though He had power over it. These views are self-contradictory. In short, revelation and reason both uphold the view that everything other than Allah is contingent, that it comes into existence after it was not existing. As for the view that Allah was inactive at first and then acted, it is supported neither by revelation nor by reason. On the contrary, both uphold the opposite.

Abū Al-Ma'ālī, in his *Al-Irshād*,[44] and many other thinkers have objected to the concept of infinite regression in the past. They argue that it is possible for you to say that you would give another person a dollar following every dollar that you give. But it is not possible to say that you would give a dollar only if you had given one before. But this example is not relevant. The relevant example is to say that you did not give a dollar unless you had given one before. That is, you make one past act precede another past act, as you make one future act follow another future act. The example that they give, on the other hand, says that you would not give a dollar unless you had

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[44] *Kitāb al-Irshād*, ed. by Muḥammad Yūsuf Mūsa and 'Alī 'Abdul-Mun'im 'Abdul-Hāmid (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1369/1950), pp. 26-27.

given one before. This involves the negation of a future act until something similar happens in the future and precedes it. It is the negation of a future act before it happens, and that is ruled out. But the negation of a past act unless another past act precedes it is possible. A gift in the future is to come from one who offers the gift. And an act of the future which has a beginning and an end cannot be preceded by something that is endless, because nothing that is endless can exist in something that ends.

(14) It is not the case that He acquired the name Creator (Al-Khāliq) only after creating (something), or the name Originator (Al-Bārī) only after originating (something).

From these words it appears that the author denies an infinite regression of events in the past. He does not, however, deny an infinite chain of events in the future, as we will see in his words that we will discuss later, "Paradise and Hell are something created, but they will not perish or disappear." This is also the view of the majority of Muslim thinkers, as we stated earlier. However, it is not correct to deny regress in the past or in the future. Jahm and his followers have denied it. They say that Paradise and Hell will finally disappear. We will discuss this view later and show that is wrong.

Those who uphold the possibility of an infinite series of contingent events both in the past and in the future are closer to the truth than those who uphold only one part of it. For Allah is eternally living, and activity is essential to life. Hence, He is doing from eternity whatever He pleases as He has described Himself. He has said, "He is the Lord of the Throne of Glory, the Doer of whatever He wills" [85:15-16]. These verses prove the following truths:

First, Allah acts as He wills and pleases.

Second, He has always done so. This is alluded to by the description being a point of praise of Himself, a real excellence that He cannot be thought of as losing at any time. He has said, "Is then One Who creates like one who does not create? Will you not receive admonition" [16:17]. Since this is an aspect of His perfection and majesty, it cannot be that He acquired it after He did not have it.

Third, when He wills a thing, He does it. Since the particle ma, rendered here as "whatever," is a general relative pronoun, the verse means that He does anything He wills. This concerns His will to do something by Himself. As for His will regarding the acts of His creatures, it is something different. If He wants (or commands) any person to do something but does not want to help him and make him do it, He does not create the act, even though the person may have

tried to do it. The act will not happen unless He wills to make him do it. This point was not understood by the Free-willers (Qadrīyyah), or by the determinists (Jabarīyyah). Consequently, they went astray on the issue of predestination (*qadr*). They failed to distinguish between Allah's will (or command) that man should do an act and His will to make him do the act. We will take up this issue of *qadr* later, God willing.

Fourth, Allah's will and action necessitate each other. What He wills He does, and what He does He has willed. This distinguishes Him from creatures, who often will what they are not able to do and do what they did not intend to do. There is none other than Allah, Who does whatever He wills.

Fifth, the verses prove that Allah has numerous wills corresponding to His acts, a separate will for each act. This is what is known by natural instincts. Allah continues willing and doing what He wills.

Sixth, whatever is proper for Allah to will is also permissible for Him to do. If He wills to descend to the lowest heaven every night, to come on the Day of Judgment for judgment, to be seen by His servants, to appear to them as He wills, to address them, to smile at them, and any other thing He so desires, nothing of that would be impossible for Him, for He does whatever He wills. We confirmed all of those actions based on the truthfulness of the one who informed us (that is, the Prophet) of those actions. If the truthful one stated it, we must believe in it. Also, He blots out or confirms whatever He wills. He is engaged every day in one thing or the other, Glorious and Exalted be He.

The view that contingents have a beginning implies that there was a time when Allah was inactive, that in the beginning He was not doing anything and then He started "doing" something.

But this does not imply that the world is eternal. Everything other than Allah is contingent and possible and comes into being by the creative act of Allah. By itself, it is nothing but non-being. Want or need is an essential quality of things other than Allah, Who alone exists necessarily by Himself, and is absolutely Self-sufficient. Self-sufficiency is part of His essence.

People hold two views concerning the questions, "Was this world created from matter or not? How did this world begin?" Allah says in the Qur'ān, "He it is Who created the heavens and the earth in six days, and His Throne was over the waters" [11:17]. Al-Bukhārī and others recorded from 'Imrān Ibn Ḥussayn that the people of Yemen asked the Prophet (peace be on him), "We have come to you to learn the faith. We wish to ask you about this matter (creation)." The Prophet (peace be on him) said, "(In the beginning)

there was only Allah, and nothing was before Him." Another narration of the *ḥadīth* ends with, "And there was nothing along with Him." A third version states, "And there was nothing other than He." The Prophet (peace be on him) then said, "His throne was on the waters. And He recorded everything in *adh-Dhikr*, and He created the heavens and the earth." Another version ends with, "Then He created the heavens and the earth."[45] The Dhikr referred to above is the Preserved Table (*al-Lawḥ al-Maḥfūz*), as is indicated in the verse, "We wrote in the Books after the *Dhikr*: My righteous servants will inherit the earth" [21:105]. What is written in the *Dhikr* is referred to as *dhikr* (in Arabic) in the same way that what is written in a book (*kitāb*) is referred to as *kitāb*.

People have interpreted the above *ḥadīth* in two ways. Some say that the Prophet (peace be on him) was stating that Allah has existed all by Himself in eternity, and He continued to be like that for a time, and then He began creating all things. Things, therefore, as individual objects or as classes are preceded by non-being or being nothing. Time, for example, began to exist in a non-temporal setting. Allah became acting after He was not doing anything from eternity until the time He started to act. And during that time of inactivity, nothing was possible for Him.

The second opinion is that the Prophet (peace be on him) was talking about the beginning of this witnessed world that Allah created in six days, after which He ascended the Throne as the Qur'ān describes in many places. (For example, "He it is Who created the heavens and the earth in six days, and His Throne was over the waters" [11:7].] It is recorded in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* from 'Abdullah Ibn 'Amr that the Prophet (peace be on him) said, "Allah fixed the measures of things fifty thousand years before the creation of the heavens and the earth. And His throne was on the waters."[46] The Prophet (peace be on him) thus stated that Allah ordained this world, which He created in six days, fifty thousand years before He created it and that His throne was on the water at that time.

The proofs for the correctness of the second opinion are:

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[45]The words, "And nothing was before Him," occur in Al-Bukhārī, 7418 and 3191; Ibn Khūzaymah, *Kitāb at-Tawḥīd*, ed. by Dr. 'Abdul-'Azīz Ibn Ibrāhīm (Riyadh: Dār Ar-Rushd, 1408/1988), 1st edition, p. 376; At-Ṭabarānī, *Al-Kabīr*, 18:497, 498. The words, "And there was nothing with Him (ma'ahu)," which the commentator mentioned, do not occur in any collection of Hadith, authentic or otherwise. However the words, "And there was nothing other than He (*ghayruhu*)," which mean the same, occur in Aḥmad, 4:431, 432.

[46]Muslim, *Al-Qadr*, 2653; At-Tirmidhī, 2156; Aḥmad, 2:169.

First, the people of Yemen (mentioned in the *ḥadīth*) asked, "We came to you to ask you about this thing (*āmr*)," and this alludes to the present existing world. *Āmr* here means *al-ma'mūr* or the object that has been brought into existence by the *āmr* (command of Allah). The Prophet (peace be on him) responded to their question by talking about the being of this existing world and not about all created things as a class, because they did not ask about that. He informed them that the heavens and the earth were created while the Throne was on the waters. He did not tell them about the creation of the Throne as it was (obviously) created before the heavens and the earth.

(Second,) the Prophet said, "There was Allah and nothing was before Him," and, in another narration, "...nothing was with Him." This was his speech in one setting. Therefore, he must have made just one of those statements and some of the narrators simply stated the meaning of the what he said (not the exact wording). The word *qabl* (before) has been authentically narrated from the Prophet in other *aḥādīth*. It is recorded in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, on the authority of Abū Hurayrah, that the Prophet (peace be on him) used to supplicate, "O Allah, You are the First and there was nothing before You."[47] The other two words (reported in the different narrations) have not been reported in any other *ḥadīth*. Therefore, many of the scholars of *ḥadīth*, such as Al-Ḥumaydī, Al-Baghawī and Ibn Al-Āthīr, have only recorded those *aḥādīth* in which the word "before" occurs. If this is correct, then it would mean that there is no reference in the *ḥadīth* to the beginning of things or the first thing created.

(Third,) the words (in the *ḥadīth* are), "Allah was there and there was nothing before him (or 'with Him or 'besides Him), and His Throne was on the waters. And He wrote everything in the Register (*adh-Dhikr*)." He mentioned those things using the conjunction "and" between them. And "He created the heavens and the earth" has been narrated with a conjunction (and) and also with "then". This shows that what he wants to tell them about is the beginning of the heavens and the earth and the things between them – things that were created in six days – and not the beginning of what Allah created before the world. The mention of "the heavens and the earth"

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[47]Part of a *ḥadīth* recorded by Muslim, *Adh-Dhikr*, 2713. Also see Abū Dāwūd, *Al-Adab*, 5051; At-Tirmidhī, *Ad-Da'wāt*, 3397; Ibn Mājah, *Ad-Du'ā'*, 3873; Aḥmad, 2:381, 404.

also shows that they were created, but the reference to something prior to them indicates it existed but it was not the first thing created.

(Fourth,) since the *ḥadīth* has been narrated in two different ways, we cannot say with certainty which is correct without some (external) evidence. If one can be shown to be stronger, if someone then claims that the Messenger certainly stated the other, he is definitely wrong. There is nothing in the Book or the Sunnah to support the other (weaker) meaning. It is not permissible to confirm it according to what one thinks the meaning of the *ḥadīth* should be. It is not narrated unconditionally, "There was Allah and nothing was with Him." But it is only narrated in the specifically mentioned context. One cannot, therefore, infer from them that Allah was doing nothing before He created the heavens and the earth.

(Fifth,) the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "Allah was there and there was nothing before him (or with Him or besides Him), and His Throne was on the waters." It is not permissible to understand those words as meaning that Allah was by Himself and there was nothing whatsoever created with Him because the words, "and His Throne was on the waters" negates that, because the clause, "and His Throne was on the waters" is either a circumstantial or a conjunctive clause. In both cases, a created object was existing at that time. Hence, it must mean that there was nothing of this witnessed world at that time.[48]

(15) He was qualified with Lordship (*rubūbīyyah*) even when there was nothing to lord over. And He was the Creator even when there was nothing created.

That is, Allah had the quality of being Lord even before anything was there to be lorded over. He also had the quality of being Creator even before anything was created.

Some commentators have drawn attention to the author's saying, "He has been qualified with Lordship (*rubūbīyyah*) and has been the Creator" rather than, "has been qualified with 'creatorship'." This is because the Creator is the One Who brings a thing from non-existence into existence and it has no other meaning. But Ar-Rabb, on the other hand, has many meanings to it. It means Lord, Guardian, Provident and Cherisher, Who nourishes, develops and leads a thing to its destined completion. It is to convey this rich

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[48]For a detailed discussion of this point, see Ibn Taymīyyah, *Majmū' al-Fatāwa*, vol. 18, pp. 210-243.

sense that the author has chosen the word *rubūbīyyah.* This ends what they state.

There is some problem with that because Al-Khaliq not only means the Creator Who brings into existence but also the One Who ordains and determines.

(16) In the same way that He is the "Reviver of life to the Dead", after He has given them life a first time, He deserves this name before bringing them to life; so, too, He deserves the name Creator before He actually created them.

That is, since Allah is called the "Reviver of Life to the Dead" before He has actually revived them, He should be called the Creator before He actually created them. The author has directed these words against the Mu'tazilah and those who agree with their opinion. We have already discussed them and we have concluded that Allah has been doing from eternity whatever He has willed.

(17) This is because He has power over all things (*kulli shayy*). All things depend on Him and are easy for Him. He is not in need of anything. Nothing is like Him. He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing.

This suggests that Allah has attributes from eternity, even before He created the world. However, the discussion of the word kull – 'all', and what it connotes and how the extent of its meaning varies according to the context, will be taken up later, God willing, under the discussion of the speech of Allah.

The Mu'tazilah have distorted the meaning of the verse, "Allah has power over all things" [2:284]. According to them, it means that Allah has power over all things that are in His power. As for human acts, He has no power over them. (This is agreed upon among them.) They dispute, however, the question of whether He can Himself do similar actions. If their interpretation of this verse were correct, it would be similar to saying, "He is Knowing of everything He knows, He creates all that He creates," and other useless statements. In fact, they have denied that He has power over all things.

According to the Ahl as-Sunnah, Allah has power over all things and all possible things are in His power. As for the impossible in itself, such as one and the same thing existing and not existing at one time, it is actually a "nothing"; it is inconceivable. No reasonable person would say that is a "thing". The same is true for

the question of whether Allah can create one like Himself or whether He can kill Himself and other impossibilities.

As for belief in Allah's complete and total Lordship, a fundamental belief, no one can believe that He is Lord of everything unless he believes that He has power over those things. Furthermore, no one believes in His complete and perfect Lordship unless he believes that He has power over all things.

(On this point there is no difference among people.) The dispute has occurred over the possible that does not yet exist: Is it a thing (*shayy*) or not? In fact, the non-existent is not a thing in reality. But Allah knows what will exist before it exists, and He records it. He may mention and tell others about it, as in the verse, "The convulsion of the last hour is a great thing" [22:1]. It is thus a "thing" with respect to knowledge, mentioning and recording. But it does not actually exist out there in reality. Or as Allah said, "Truly, when He intends a thing, His command is: 'Be,' and it is" [36:82], and "I did indeed create you before, when you had been nothing" [19:9]. That is, man was nothing out there in reality, although he was something in Allah's knowledge. He also said, "Has there not been over man a long period of time when he was nothing (to be) mentioned?" [76:1]

The words, "There is nothing like Him," refute the thesis of the anthropomorphists (*mushābbih*ah), and the words, "He is All-Hearing, All-Seeing," refute the thesis of the negators of divine attributes (*al-mu'attilah*). The truth is that Allah has all the attributes of perfection, and there is nothing like Him in these attributes. As for the created, although they have the attributes of hearing and seeing, their hearing and seeing is not like the hearing and seeing of the Lord. It is not necessary that affirming attributes also affirm resemblance and similarity. The attributes of a created one are those befitting him, and the attributes of the Creator are those befitting Him.

We do not deny, concerning Allah, what He has given of attributes of Himself or what the one who knows His Lord best (Prophet Muḥammad) has affirmed of Him. He knew what should be ascribed to Him and what should not. He was eager to convey what he knew to his people. Also, He had the most eloquent language and was most able to convey what he intended. If you deny any of those statements, you have disbelieved in what was revealed to Muḥammad (peace be on him).

When you describe Allah in terms in which He has described Himself, do not liken Him to His creatures, because nothing is like Him. If you liken Him to His creatures, you deny Him. Al-Bukhārī's teacher, Nu'aym Ibn Ḥamad Al-Khuzā'ī said, "Whoever

likens Allah to His creatures commits infidelity. And whoever denies what Allah has ascribed to Himself also commits infidelity. There is no anthropomorphism in what Allah has said of Himself or in what His Prophet (peace be on him) has said of Him." We will return to this topic when commenting on the author's words, "One who does not avoid negation as well as anthropomorphism goes astray and does not properly glorify Allah."

Allah has said about Himself that to Him belongs the highest similitude. He has said, "To those who believe not in the Hereafter, applies the similitude of evil; to Allah applies the highest similitude" [16:60]; and, "To Him belongs the loftiest similitude in the heavens and the earth: for He is Exalted in Might, Full of Wisdom" [30:27]. Thus, Allah has applied the evil similitude to the polytheists and their idols, which implies shortcomings, defect and imperfection. He has reserved the highest similitude, which involves all excellences, for Himself. Those who deny the attributes of perfection for Allah actually apply to Him an evil similitude. They destroy His lofty similitude and sublime image which encompass all positive attributes and noble qualities.

Since Allah is qualified with the most perfect attributes, He has the highest similitude and He is more deserving of it than anyone else. It is impossible for there to be two beings that have the highest similitude, for if they were equal in all respects, neither one would be higher and loftier than the other. And if they are not equal, then the highest similitude will only apply to one of them. Hence it is impossible for the One to Whom applies the highest similitude to have an equal or anyone similar to Him.[49]

The scholars of Qur'ānic exegesis differ about the connotation of the "highest similitude". One who has been guided by Allah has been able to reconcile their statements. Some say that the highest similitude encompasses four concepts: (1) the highest, loftiest attributes; (2) informing the creation about them; (3) knowing its existence, informing about it, and mentioning it, and (4) the worship of the Lord by means of the knowledge and cognizance that is in the hearts of those who worship and remember him.

Therefore, there are four matters. First is affirmation of the highest attributes of Allah, regardless of whether the servant actually knows those attributes or not. This is the meaning for those who interpret the phrase as referring to attributes.

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[49]Ibn Al-Qayyīm has discussed this point at length in *Mukhtaṣar aṣ-Ṣawā'iq al-Murṣalah*, vol. 1, pp. 213f.

Second is its existence in one's knowledge and perceptions. This is the meaning of both the early and later scholars' statement that is what is in the hearts of His servants, covering aspects of knowledge, remembrance, love, honor, respect, fear, hope, trust and turning to Him. That that is in the heart is the greatest similitude that no one else could possibly share in. It is something special in their hearts as it is something particular to His being. This is the meaning given by those commentators who say that it refers to the inhabitants of the heavens glorifying, loving and worshiping Him, as well as those who inhabit the earth, regardless of those who ascribe partners to Him, disobey Him or deny His attributes. The inhabitants of the earth glorify Him, extol Him and humble themselves to His greatness, submitting to His power and greatness. Allah says, "Unto Him belongs whatsoever is in the heavens and in the earth. All are obedient unto Him" [30:26].

Third is to mention His attributes, inform others about them and glorify them by denying any kind of weakness, deficiency or similarity for them.

Fourth refers to loving the One Who has those attributes, affirming His oneness, having sincerity to Him, having trust in Him, and turning to Him. Whenever belief in the attributes is more complete and perfect, love and sincerity for Him is stronger. The statements of the Elders all revolve around the above four meanings.

No one goes further astray than the one who puts verse 27 of Sūrat Ar-Rūm and verse 11 of Sūrat Ash-Shūrā in contention with one another. They use the verse from Ash-Shūrā to deny Allah's attributes and they are blind to the remainder of the verse, which says, "And He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing." This misguidance even led one of them, Aḥmad Ibn Abī Duwad Al-Qāḍī, to advise the Caliph Al-Mā'mūn to write on the covering of the Ka'bah, "There is nothing like unto Him, and He is the Strong, the Wise," attempting to distort the words of Allah in order to deny Allah's attributes of Seeing and Hearing. Similarly, another misled person, Jahm Ibn Ṣafwān, said, "I wish I could erase from the Qur'ān, 'Then He settled over the Throne' [7:54]." We ask Allah, the Great, the Hearing, the Seeing, to confirm us with the confirmed saying (the testimony of faith) in both this life and the Hereafter by His grace and mercy.

Concerning the grammatical parsing of ka-mithlihī, there are different views. First, the ka is considered a non-restrictive relative clause added for emphasis. 'Aws Ibn Hajr has said:

There is no one like (*ka-mithl*) the young Zuhayr,
no one equivalent to him in behavior.

Another said:

There exists no man of men similar to him (*ka-mithlihim*).

A third said:

Dead bodies like the (*ka-mithl*) trunk of the palm tree.

Therefore, mithl is the predicate of *laysa* and its simple substantive is *shayy*. This is a strong, good opinion. The Arabs know this meaning in their dialects. It would not be obscure to them when they hear it. An additional ka for emphasis can be found in Arabic in the following statements, "What was left are the three stones under the cooking pot, as they were (*ka-kama*) put," and, "It became like the remains of eaten-up crops."

A second view is that *mithl* (like) is extraneous. That is, the meaning is *laysa ka-huwa shayy* ('there is nothing like him'). This is far from the correct view. *Mithl* is a noun and the opinion that states that an additional letter has been added for emphasis is much more likely the opinion that states that an additional complete word has been added extraneously.

The third view is that there is nothing augmentative in the statement. It is similar to the statement, "Someone like you does not do that," which means: 'You don't do such a thing.' The word similar is used as exaggeration. That is, "If there were any kind of similitude to Allah, it would not be similar to Him. So what about the case when there is no such similitude?"

Other opinions are given but the first view seems the most apparent.

(18) He created (*khalaqa*) the creation (*khālq*) with His Knowledge (*bi-'ilmihi*).

Khalaqa means to initiate, originate, and bring into existence. It also means to determine and ordain (*qadara*). *Khalq* is the infinitive verbal noun, but here it means *makhlūq*, 'the created'. The word *bi-'ilmihi* functions as a *hal*, denotative of state, suggesting that Allah created the world with full knowledge. He has said, "Should He not know what He created, whereas He is the Most Subtle and Most Aware?" [67:14]. And He has elaborated, "With Him are the keys to the Unseen, the treasures that none knows but He. He knows whatever there is on earth and in the sea. Not a leaf falls but with His knowledge. There is not a grain in the darkness of the earth, nor anything fresh or dry but is noted in a Clear Record. It is He Who takes your souls by night and knows all that you do by day" [6:59-60]. That verse contains a refutation of the Mu'tazilah.

Imām 'Abdul-'Azīz Al-Makkī, a student and friend of Imām Ash-Shāfi'ī, in his book *Al-Hidah,*[50] gave an account of a discussion he had with Bishr Al-Marisī at the court of Al-Mā'mūn. He questioned Bishr about the knowledge of Allah. Bishr replied, "He is not ignorant." 'Abdul-'Azīz kept on repeating the question to him and he kept coming back with the same answer. He would not admit that Allah knows by His knowledge. 'Abdul-'Azīz then said, "Denying His ignorance is not an act of praise. If I say, 'This pillar is not ignorant, it does not mean that it knows. Furthermore, Allah has praised the prophets, angels and Believers because of their knowledge, not because they were not ignorant. If knowledge is confirmed, then ignorance is negated. But negating ignorance does not affirm knowledge. And human beings must affirm of Allah what He has affirmed of Himself and negate what He has negated. And furthermore, we must be quiet about what He has kept quiet about."

The rational arguments proving that Allah is qualified with the attribute of knowledge are as follows. First, it is not possible for Allah to create things without knowing what they are. Creating something means to bring that thing into existence by His will. Willing implies that He conceptualizes what He wills. The conception of what He wills is the knowledge of the willed thing. Therefore, creation necessarily implies knowledge. Second, the perfection and order that we see in the things of the world requires that the One Who made them should know them thoroughly. A perfect work cannot be expected of an ignorant being.

Third, among the beings of the world are those who have knowledge. And since knowledge is an attribute of perfection, it is inconceivable that their Creator should be without knowledge.

This argument may be elaborated in two ways. First, it is self-evident that the Creator is more complete and perfect than the creation, as the Necessary Being is more perfect than the possible. It is also self-evident that, of two beings, one knowing and the other not knowing, what is knowing is more perfect than what is not knowing. Hence, if the Creator is not knowing, the possible being would be more perfect than He, and this is an impossibility. Second, whatever knowledge there is in the possible realm, which are the created things, is from Him. Therefore, it is inconceivable that the Creator and the Originator of perfection should not be perfect. On the contrary, He should be more perfect than the created objects. Again, to Allah belongs the highest similitude. He and His creatures are not equal, neither with respect to analogy or syllogistic

[50]According to most scholars, it is not correct to attribute this book to Al-Makkī.

reasoning. Rather, every perfection that is affirmed of the created is more substantiated of the Creator. Finally, every shortcoming that the created are possibly free of, He is, in the first place, also free of it.

(19) He has ordained all things in due measure.

Allah has said, "It is He Who created all things, and ordained them in due proportions" [25:2]; "Truly, all things have We created in proportion and measure" [54:49); "And the command of Allah is ordained according to a measure" [33:38]; and, "(He is the One) Who has created and further given order and proportion, Who has ordained laws and granted guidance" [87:2-3].

Muslim recorded from 'Abdullah Ibn 'Amr that the Prophet (peace be on him) said, "Allah ordained the measures of created things fifty thousand years before He created the heavens and the earth, and His throne was on the waters."[51]

(20) He has fixed their terms.

That is, Allah has fixed the life-span of the creatures such that when their time comes due, they are not able to postpone or advance it a single moment. Allah says, "When their term is reached, not an hour can they cause delay nor an hour can they advance it" [10:49]. Also, "Nor can a soul die except by Allah's leave, the term being fixed as by writing" [3:145]. Muslim recorded from 'Abdullah Ibn Mas'ūd that Umm Ḥabībah, a wife of the Prophet (peace be on him), once said in a prayer, "O Allah, benefit me by my husband, the Messenger of Allah, by my father, Abū Sufyān, and by my brother, Mu'āwīyah." The Prophet (peace be on him) then said, "You have asked of Allah about durations of life already set, and length of days already allotted, and sustenance, the shares of which have been fixed. Allah would not do anything before its due time, and He would not delay anything beyond its due time. If you had asked Allah to provide you refuge from the torment of the Hell-fire or from the torment of the grave, it would have been better for you and more excellent."[52]

One who is killed dies, too, at his appointed time. Allah knows things and fixes them. He determines that one man will die of illness, another will be killed, a third will be buried under a falling

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[51] Muslim, *Al-Qadr*, 2653; At-Tirmidhī, 2156; Aḥmad, 2:169.

[52] Muslim, *Al-Qadr*, 2663, 32, 33; Aḥmad, 1:390, 413, 433, 445, 446.

wall, a fourth will be burned, a fifth drowned, and so on, concerning all causes of death. Allah created death and life. He also created the causes of death and life.

According to the Mu'tazilah, the murdered has had his life-span shortened. If he had not been killed, he would have lived to his complete term; therefore, he actually has two terms. But this is wrong. It is not conceivable to say of Allah that He created a term for him that He knew he would not reach. Nor can one say that He would make his term open to two cases, in the same manner that Allah has commanded the guardian of a person who is murdered to observe equality in avenging the murder or for the killer to pay a ransom (if the guardian agreed) because he has committed what Allah has prohibited and has used means which are forbidden.

In this meaning is the *ḥadīth*, "Keeping the ties of kin extends one's life-span."[53] That is, it is the cause of his prolonged life. Allah has decreed that a specific person will do good to his kin, and because of it he will live longer than he would have lived if he had not done so. Allah has decreed that cause and fulfilled it. Similarly, He has decreed that another person will not keep the ties of kin; therefore, he will live to a specific span because of that. The same kind of argument holds true for murder, death, and so on.

One may ask if good behavior towards one kin enhances the span of life, then does supplication (*du'ā'*) have the same effect? The answer is that there is no necessary relation between the two. This response is based on the above statement of the Prophet (peace be on him) to Umm Ḥabībah, "You have asked of Allah about durations of life which have already been set." One's life-span is determined and it is not confirmed in any text of the Shari'ah that supplication can make any change in that. This is different from the case of being saved from punishment in the Hereafter. It is clear from the texts that supplications can have a positive effect on that matter. However, prayer for change in the term when it promotes the good of the Hereafter has also been allowed.

An-Nasā'ī recorded from 'Ammar Ibn Yāsir that the Prophet (peace be on him) said in an invocation, "O Allah, by Your knowledge of the Unseen and Your Power over the creation, give

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[53]Ash-Shihāb Al-Quda'ī, *Musnad*, ed. by Ḥamadī 'Abdul-Mājid As-Salafī (Beirut: Mu'assasat ar-*Risālah*, 1405/1985), *ḥadīth* no. 100. The *ḥadīth* with this wording is rated weak because one of its transmitters, Naṣr Ibn Ḥammad, is very unreliable. However, the meaning of the *ḥadīth* is supported by a number of other *aḥādīth* reported in various collections. See Al-Bukhārī, 2067, 5986; Muslim, 2557; Abū Dāwūd, 1693; At-Tirmidhī, 1979; Aḥmad, 3:156, 247, 266.

me life as long as life is good for me and cause me to die when death is best for me..."[54] This is further supported by a *ḥadīth* recorded by Al-Ḥākim in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*[55] from Thawban, who narrated that the Prophet (peace be on him) said, "Nothing can repulse predestination except supplication. Also, nothing increases one's lifespan except piety, and a man is deprived of his sustenance because of the sins he committed."[56] Making a *nadhar* (oath that one would make an offering if something is granted to him) is discouraged in *ḥadīth* because it neither wards off evil nor brings blessings. It is confirmed in the two *Ṣaḥīḥ*s of Al-Bukhārī and Muslim that the Prophet (peace be on him) forbade nadhar and said, "It does not do any good except to take money from the pocket of a miser."[57]

Supplication is correct and beneficial in some cases but not in all cases. The same is true for *nadhar*. For that reason, Allah does not love transgression in supplications. Imām Aḥmad disapproved of praying for a long life and he said, "That is a *fait accompli* that has already been decided."

As for the statement of Allah, "And no one grows old who grows old nor is aught lessened of his life, but it is recorded in a Book" [35:11]. There is a difference of opinion concerning what the male indefinite pronoun in *'umrihi* is referring to. Some say it is analogous to the statement, "I have a dollar and half of it," meaning, "I have a dollar and a half of another." In this reading, the verse would be, "Nor is a man grown old granted length of days, nor is a part cut off from another's life (*'umrihi*), but it is in a Book ordained."

Others say that refers to addition or deletion in the scrolls that are in the possession of the angels. These people interpret the verses, "For each period is an appointed writing. Allah does blot out or confirm what He pleases. With Him is the Mother of the Book" [13:38-39], as referring to Allah blotting out or confirming what is recorded in the scrolls in the possession of the angels. And, "With Him is the Mother of the Book" refers to the Preserved Tablet (*al-*

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[54]Part of a *ḥadīth* in An-Nasā'ī, 3:54, 55. It was stated earlier.

[55]The name of his work is *Al-Mustadrak 'alā aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥ*ayn and most scholars of *ḥadīth* do not refer to it as a *Ṣaḥīḥ* because it contains many weak and fabricated *aḥādīth*.

[56]Ibn Mājah, *Al-Fitan*, 4022; Aḥmad, 5:277, 280, 282; Al-Ḥakīm, *Al-Mustadrak*, 1:493. The first two clauses of this *ḥadīth* are considered correct due to supporting evidence for them. The last clause of the *ḥadīth* has not been transmitted through acceptable chains.

[57]Al-Bukhārī, 6668, 6692, 6693; Muslim, 1639; Abū Dāwūd, 3287; An-Nasā'ī, *An-Nahī 'an an-Nadhar*, 7:15-16; Aḥmad, 2:61, 86.

Lūḥ al-Maḥfuḍ). The context of the verse points to this interpretation. The context is, "For each period is an appointed writing," and then Allah says, "Allah does blot out or confirm what He pleases," that is, from that writing, "And with Him is the Mother of the Book," that is, its source, which is the Preserved Tablet.

Others say that this verse means that Allah erases and abrogates what He wishes of His laws and He affirms whichever of them He wishes. The context points more to this interpretation. Allah says (before the above-quoted part), "And it was never the part of a messenger to bring a sign except as Allah permitted. For each period there is an appointed writing." This means that the Messenger does not produce a sign from himself but it is only from Allah. And then Allah says, "For each period is an appointed writing. Allah does blot out or confirm what He pleases. With Him is the Mother of the Book." That is, every divinely revealed code of law (*shari'ah*) has its appointed time and limit. Then Allah abrogates that legislation with another legislation. Allah abrogates what He wills of those laws when its time ends and He confirms whatever of those laws He so desires.

There are also other interpretations given for this verse. Allah knows best what is correct.

(21) Nothing about them was hidden from Him before He created them. And He knew everything they would do before He created them.

Allah knows what has happened, what will happen, what did not happen and, even were it to happen, (He knows) how it would happen. As Allah says in the Qur'ān, "If they were returned (to this world), they would certainly commit again what they have been forbidden" [6:28]. He knows that they will not be returned, but He states that if they were to be returned, they would return to their old misdeeds. Allah also says, "If Allah found in them any good, He would have indeed made them listen (to the Guidance). As it is, if He had made them listen, they would have turned back and declined (faith)" [8:23]. This is a refutation of the Rafiḍah and Qadarīyyah, who say that Allah does not know something until He creates it and brings it into existence. This is related to the question of predestination (*qadr*) and, God willing, we will discuss it in greater detail later.

(22) He has commanded them to obey Him and He has forbidden them to disobey Him.

After mentioning creation and predestination, the author mentions command and prohibition, alluding to Allah's creating of the creation for the purpose of His worship. As Allah says, "I have not created the jinns and mankind except that they should serve and worship Me" [51:56]. He also said, "He created death and life that He might try which of you is the best in deeds" [67:2].

(23) Things occur as He ordains and wills them. His will is always carried out. There is no will for His servants except for what He wills for them. Whatever He wills for them happens and what He does not will for them does not happen.

Allah has stated, "You do not will except as Allah wills; for Allah is Knowing, Wise" [76:30]; "And you will not will except as Allah wills – the Lord of the Worlds" [81:29]; "Even if We did send angels unto them, and the dead would speak to them, and We gathered together all things before their very eyes, they are not the ones to believe, unless it is in Allah's plan" [6:111]. He has also said, "If your Lord had so willed, they would not have done it" [6:112], and "If it had been the will of your Lord, they would have all believed, all who are on the earth" [10:99]. He has also said, "Those whom Allah wills to guide, He opens their breasts to Islam; (but) those whom He wills to leave astray, He makes their breast close and constricted as if they had to climb up to the skies" [6:125].

And when quoting Noah's statement to his people, Allah says, "Of no profit will be my counsel to you, much as I desire to give you good counsel, if it be that Allah wills to leave you astray" [11:34]; and, "Whom Allah wills He leaves to wander; whom He wills, He places on the way that is straight" [6:39]. These and many other similar verses prove that what Allah wills happens and what He does not will does not happen. How can something happen in His kingdom that He does not will? No belief is further astray than the belief that Allah wills a non-believer to believe, but he does not believe and his will prevails over the will of Allah. Far exalted is Allah above what these people allege.

One may object to our view and say that it is contradicted by the following verses, "Those who ascribe partners (to Allah) will say: 'If Allah had willed, we would not have ascribed partners to Him, nor would our fathers'" [6:148]; "The worshipers of false gods say: 'If Allah had so willed, we would not have worshiped anything but

Him, neither we nor our fathers'" [16:35); and, "They say: 'If it had been the will of Allah, Most Gracious, we would not have worshiped such (deities).' Of that they have no knowledge. They do nothing but lie" [43:20]. But Allah is condemning them for their ascribing their polytheism to the will of Allah. Similarly, He censured Iblīs for ascribing to Allah his misguidance, when he said, "'My Lord, because you have put me in the wrong, I will make wrong seem right to them on the earth'" [15:39].

This objection has been answered in many ways, the best of which are the following. Allah condemned them because they thought that His creative will (*mashi'ah*) implies His pleasure and love for the act. They were actually saying, "If He disliked that act and was angered by it, why did He will it?" So they take His creative will as evidence for His approval. Allah refutes them on this point. Or He is censuring their belief that Allah's creative will is evidence that He commanded the act. Or Allah is rebuking them for rejecting His Shari'ah and His commands with which He sent His messengers and concerning which He revealed His books by His command and decree. Instead of obeying those commands, they refer to Allah's general will. Instead of them mentioning that from the point of view of *tawḥīd*, they mention it to oppose His commands and laws. This is what the *zanadiqah* and ignorant folk do. When they are commanded to do or not to do something, they excuse themselves on the plea of predestination. At the time of 'Umar, a thief similarly justified his theft on the grounds of predestination. 'Umar chastised him and retorted, "I also amputate your hands on the will and decree of Allah." The verse, "Thus did those before them make charges of falsehood" [6:148], supports this view. It exposes such people and says that their intention is only to evade the command of Allah. One may ask how they know that Allah did not ordain it. Did they peek into the Unseen?

Some people argue from the *ḥadīth* which mentions that Moses charged Adam with bringing mankind out of Paradise, and Adam rebutted the charge by saying, "Do you blame me for a thing Allah had ordained for me forty years before I was created?" After relating their discussion, the Prophet (peace be on him) commented that Adam defeated Moses in the argument.[58] This *ḥadīth* is authentic; therefore, we accept and submit to it. We do not try to find fault with its transmitters or question its wording, as do the Qadarīyyah. Nor do we try to explain it away. The correct understanding of the

[58]Al-Bukhārī, 3409, 4736, 4738, 6614, 7515; Muslim, 2652; Abū Dāwūd, *As-Sunnah*, 4701; At-Tirmidhī, *Al-Qadr*, 2135; Ibn Mājah, *Al-Muqaddamah*, 80.

ḥadīth, though, is not that Adam excused his sin on the grounds of predestination (*qadr*). He knew his Lord and his sin too well to offer that excuse. How can one expect such a thing from a prophet which one cannot expect from an ordinary Believer? Similarly, Moses knew his father (Adam) and his sin better than to blame Adam for a sin that he had repented of and that Allah had forgiven him, and he had been chosen and guided. The thing for which Moses blamed Adam was the affliction that mankind faced in being removed from Paradise. Adam countered this charge by saying that the affliction had already been ordained. Thus, he argued according to predestination, not concerning the sin he committed, but concerning the affliction that was the result of the sin. One can refer to predestination concerning calamities and afflictions but not concerning sins.

That is the best interpretation given for that *ḥadīth*. What is determined of calamities and afflictions must be submitted to and accepted. This is part of the complete pleasure with Allah as Lord. As for sins, one should not commit them. But if one does commit sins, he must ask for forgiveness and repent. Therefore, one repents of sins and patiently bears afflictions. Allah says, "Bear patiently, for the promise of Allah is true; and ask forgiveness for your sin" [40:55]; and, "If you are patient and fear Allah, their plotting will not harm you in the least" [3:120].

As for the statement of Iblīs, "'Lord, because you have led me astray...,'" Allah has condemned Him for justifying his act on the basis of predestination. But he is not being blamed for his recognition that what he did was preordained. Look at what Noah (peace be on him) said, "Of no profit will be my counsel to you, much as I desire to give you counsel, if it be that Allah wills to leave you astray. He is your Lord, and to Him will you return" [11:34]. And how beautiful are these lines of a poet:

> What You will happens,
> even though I may not will it,
> and what I will does not happen
> if You do not will it.

Wahb Ibn Munabbiḥ said, "I contemplated *qadr* and became confused and lost. Again I contemplated *qadr* and became confused and lost. Then I discovered that the people who understand *qadr* best are those who do not discuss it; and the people most ignorant of *qadr* are those who talk about it."

(24) He gives guidance to whomever He wills, protects them and keeps them safe from harm as an act of grace. And He leads astray whomever He wills, abases them and afflicts them out of His justice.

This is a refutation of the Mu'tazilī view that it is incumbent upon Allah to do what is best for human beings. This topic is part of a larger question on divine guidance and abandonment.

The Mu'tazilah say, "Guidance from Allah is simply showing the straight path. Misguidance (being led astray) means the He pronounces that someone has strayed, or His judgment that someone has strayed, when the servant himself creates an act of misguidance." This is all based on their wrong principle that human beings create their own actions.

The evidence for what the author has said includes Allah's statement, "You cannot guide whom you like; it is Allah Who guides whom He wills" [28:56]. If guidance were simply to show the straight path, then how can that type of guidance be denied of the Prophet (peace be on him)? He does show the straight path to everyone, whether they accept it or reject it. And Allah says, "Had We willed, We would have given everyone his guidance" [32:13], and "He leaves astray whom He wills, and guides whom He wills" [74:31]. If guidance from Allah were simply defining what is true, it has been done for everyone, so how can it can it be qualified in these verses by His will to do so? Allah also says, "Had it not been for the grace of My Lord, I should have certainly have been among those brought there (to Hell)" [37:57]. And finally, "Whom Allah wills, He leaves to stray; whom He wills, He places on the Way that is straight" [6:39].

(25) All of them are subject to His will, between either His grace or His justice.

This is true because they are as Allah has said of them, "It is He Who has created you; and of you are some that are unbelievers and some that are Believers" [64:2]. Hence, when He guides someone to faith, it is an act of grace from Him and to Him belongs the praise for that act. But when He leaves another to wander, it is His justice and He is also deserving of praise for that.

We will discuss this topic in more detail later, God willing. This is because the author did not put all of his statements concerning *qadr* in one place. Therefore, we will follow his order.

(26) He is exalted above having opponents (*aḍad*) or equals (*andad*).

Ḍidd means 'opposite' or 'opponent'; *nidd* means 'equal'. Allah has no one to oppose Him; what He wills happens; what He does not will does not happen; and there is none equal to or like Him. As Allah has said, "There is none like unto Him" [112:4]. By denying that Allah has an opponent or an equal, the author seems to be censuring the Mu'tazilī view that man is the creator of his acts.

(27) His decision is never reversed; His command is never resisted; His will is never frustrated.

That is to say, there is no one Who can force Him to change His decision, delay its implementation, or frustrate its execution. He is the One God, the Supreme, the Irresistible.

(28) We believe in all of these things, and We are certain that everything comes from Him.

Concerning *īmān* (faith), God willing, it will be discussed later. As for *al-iqan*, it means *istiqrār* - 'to settle'. For example, water *yaqina* in the tank, that is, water settles in the tank. As for the *tanwīn* in *kullan*, it stands for the construct state, so it refers to everything that happens. The sentence, therefore, means that we have a firm and unshakable conviction that everything that happens is from Allah. Everything is determined and ordained by Him. Everything is created and brought into being by His will. We will return to this point later, God willing.

(29) (And we believe and are certain) that Muḥammad is His chosen Servant (*'abd*), His elect Prophet (*nabī*) and His Messenger (*rasūl*), with whom He is well-pleased.

The words used by Aṭ-Ṭaḥāwī for "chosen", "elect" and "well-pleased" are very similar in meaning.

Note that the completeness of human beings lies in the actualization of the true worship of Allah. Whenever the human being increases his actualization of that worship, he becomes more complete and he ascends in degree. Anyone who thinks that human beings may transcend the limits of worship, in any manner whatsoever, and that this transcendence means greater perfection, is a most ignorant and deviant person. Allah has said, "They say that

the Most Gracious has begotten offspring – exalted is He above that. They are but servants raised in honor" [21:26]. There are other similar verses in the Qur'ān. Allah describes His Prophet (peace be on him) as 'abd (servant) when mentioning his greatest event. While discussing the Prophet's ascension to heaven, He says, "Glory be to Allah, Who took His servant (*'abd*) for a journey by night" [17:1]. (He has referred to the Prophet in this manner in several other verses. For example,) He has said, "Yet when the servant of Allah stands forth to invoke Him" [72:19]; "He (Allah) conveyed the inspiration to His servant what He meant to convey" [53:10]; and, "If you are in doubt as to what We have revealed to Our servant..." [2:23]. It is because of (his excellent servitude to Allah) that he excelled everyone in this world and will surpass everyone in the next. That is why Jesus will say on the Day of Judgment, when the people come to him seeking his intercession on their behalf, "Go to Muḥammad; he is the servant (*'abd*) who has had all of his early and later faults forgiven."[59] He attained that great status through his complete servitude of Allah.

The author has used a *kasrah* in the statement "*inna Muḥammadan*," in conjunction with the words, "*inna Allaha wāḥidun....*" It has to be in this manner because they are ruled by the governing words, "And we say (*naqul*) about Allah's oneness..."[60]

The well known approach of the theologians to prophethood is through demonstration of miracles. Many of them do not recognize the prophethood of prophets except through miracles, and they confirm them in strange ways. Many of them require the rejection of supernatural events coming through anyone except prophets. They even deny the wondrous acts that occur to the pious devotees of Allah, the existence of magic, and so on.

There is no doubt that miracles constitute authentic evidence, but miracles are not the only kind of evidence. Prophethood is claimed either by the most honest person or the most dishonest person. It is not difficult for anyone except the most ignorant to ascertain which is which. The situation and circumstances around them reveal who is who. There are many ways to distinguish between the truthful and the liars for people other than prophets; therefore, what about the case of those who claim to be prophets? (There must also be many

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[59]Part of the *ḥadīth* on intercession reported by Anas Ibn Mālik and recorded in Al-Bukhārī, 4476, 6365, 7410, 7516; Muslim, 193, 322; Ibn Mājah, *Az-Zuhd*, 4312; Aḥmad, 3:116, 244, 247, 248.

[60]This is a grammatical point that need not concern the English reader.

ways to determine if they are truthful.) As Ḥassan said about the Prophet (peace be on him), "Had there been no other distinguishing signs in him, his face would have been sufficient to tell you about him."

Whenever an imposter has claimed prophecy, his ignorance, lies, wickedness and servility to Satan have been exhibited to everyone who has the least bit of discernment. A messenger must tell people things, command them to do specific things and perform specific acts, all of which demonstrate his sincerity and truthfulness. As for the imposter, the things he expounds, the rules he prescribes and the deeds that he performs all contain things that expose his falsehood in different ways. One is the opposite of the other. For every two people who claim the same thing, one will be truthful and the other a liar. It is inevitable that the veracity of the one and the falsehood of the other become clear to the people, even if only after some time. Truth leads to goodness and untruth must lead to evil.

In the *Ṣaḥīḥs* of Al-Bukhārī and Muslim it is recorded that the Prophet (peace be on him) said, "Be truthful, for truth leads to righteousness and righteousness leads to Paradise. One keeps on being truthful until Allah records him among the truthful. Refrain from lying, for lying leads to wickedness and wickedness leads to Hell. One goes on lying until his name is recorded among the liars."[61] This is why Allah has said, "Shall I inform you on whom the evil ones descend? They descend on every lying, wicked person, and pour hearsay vanities in their ears, and most of them are liars. And the poets! It is those straying in evil who follow them. Do you not see that they wander distracted in every valley? They say what they do not practice?" [26:221-226].

Soothsayers, fortune-tellers and the like, although they sometimes may turn out to be correct concerning something they said about the Unseen, have enough lies and evil deeds that it becomes clear that the source of their narrations is not an angel and that they are not prophets. When the Prophet (peace be on him) asked Ibn Sayyad to inform him what the Prophet had kept hidden from him, he said, "Smoke." Then the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "Down with you. You cannot be more than what you are,"[62] meaning: 'you are nothing but a soothsayer.' And he said to the Prophet, "They (his visiting spirits) sometimes bring him the truth

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[61]Muslim, *Al-Birr wa aṣ-Ṣalāh*, 2607; Abū Dāwūd, *Al-Adab*, 4989; At-Tirmidhī, *Al-Birr wa aṣ-Ṣalāh*, 1962; Aḥmad, 1:384, 393.

[62]Al-Bukhārī, 1354, 3055, 6123, 6618; Muslim, *Al-Fitan wa Ashrat as-Sa'ah*, 2930; Abū Dāwūd, *Al-Malaḥīm*, 4329; At-Tirmidhī, *Al-Fitan*, 2250; Aḥmad, 2:148, 149.

and sometimes falsehood."[63] He also said, "I see a throne on the water."[64] And that was the throne of Satan. The Qur'ān makes it clear that poets are only followed by those who wander astray, indulging in their evil desires, even if it ruins their lives in the end. One who recognizes the Prophet, his truthfulness, his keeping of his word, his doing what he says, will be convinced that he was neither a poet nor a soothsayer.

People have different ways of discriminating between a truthful person and a liar. They use such means even for common people like farmers, weavers, writers, grammarians, doctors, jurists, and so on. (Similarly, there are ways to determine the veracity of a prophet.) Prophecy encompasses concepts and precepts which are the noblest of all truths and principles of conduct known to man. It is necessary that the prophet set an example in everything. If this is true, it is not difficult to ascertain who is a true prophet and who is not.

The profound scholars state that if something is reported by one, two or three persons, that is circumstantial evidence that leads the report to be considered true by necessity. In the same way, one person's pleasure with another, or his love or hate, pleasure or displeasure, may be noted from the expression on his face, even if he is not able to convey it in words. Allah has said, "Had We so willed, We could have shown them to you, and you would have known them by their marks" [47:30]. Then Allah continues, "But surely you will know them by the tone of their speech" [47:30]. And there is a saying which goes, "When you conceal something in your heart, Allah reveals it through your face and the slip of your tongue."

Just as one discovers a truthful report from a deceitful report through circumstantial evidence, what about the case of one who claims to be a prophet? How can the truthfulness of such be hidden from his lies? How can it be that it is possible to distinguish between the truthful claimant to prophecy from the lying claimant through different evidence?

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[63]Al-Bukhārī, 6273; Muslim, *Al-Fitan*, 2930.

[64]Part of a *ḥadīth* in Muslim, *Al-Fitan*, 2925, narrated by Abū Sa'īd Al-Khudrī. The *ḥadīth* states, "Once the Prophet, Abū Bakr and 'Umar met Abū 'Ayyād. The Prophet (peace be on him) said, 'Will you bear witness that I am the Messenger of Allah? He said, 'Will you bear witness that I am the messenger of Allah? The Prophet (peace be on him) said, 'I believe in Allah, His angels, and His books.' Then he asked him, 'What do you see?' He said, 'I see a throne on the waters.' The Prophet (peace be on him) then said, 'You rāther see the throne of Iblīs on the waters...'" Also, see At-Tirmidhī, 2248.

Khadījah, may Allah be pleased with her, knew that her husband was honest and truthful. Therefore, when he received his first revelation and he told her, "I fear for my life," she said to him, "Fear not. I swear by Allah, that Allah will never disgrace you. You keep the ties of kinship, speak the truth, help the needy, honor the guest, give to the poor and assist those in difficulty."[65] Obviously, the Prophet (peace be on him) was not fearful because he told lies; he knew about himself that he did not lie. He feared, though, that some evil might befall him. That is the second stage. Khadījah told him what negated such a fear by reminding him of his virtues and noble qualities. She knew that it is Allah's way not to disgrace people of that nature.

Similarly, when the Negus, the emperor of Abyssinia, enquired about the teachings of the Prophet and the Muslim refugees from Makkah recited a portion of the Qur'ān to him, he told them, "This and what Moses brought are two rays that shine from the same source of light."[66]

When Khadījah took the Prophet (peace be on him) to her cousin Waraqah Ibn Nawfal, who was a Christian and who used to write the Gospel in Arabic, and asked him to listen to what had happened to the Prophet (peace be on him), he responded, "This is the angel (*an-namūs*) who used to visit Moses."[67]

When Heraclius, the king of the Byzantines, received the letter from the Prophet (peace be on him) inviting him to Islam, he inquired whether there were any Arabs in the city at that time. Abū Sufyān and a trade caravan happened to be present. The king called for him and asked Abū Sufyān about the Prophet (peace be on him). He commanded the other Arabs (who were with Abū Sufyān) to contradict him if he should lie. They ended up endorsing with their silence all that he said. The king asked, "Were any of his forefathers a king?" Abū Sufyān said no. The king asked, "Did anyone else among you make the same statements before him?" Abū Sufyān answered no. He then asked, "Does he come from a noble family?" "Yes," was Abū Sufyān's answer.

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[65]Part of a *ḥadīth* narrated by 'Ā'ishah, recorded in Al-Bukhārī, 3, 4935, 6982; Muslim, *Al-Īmān*, 160; Aḥmad, 6:153, 232.

[66]Part of a long *ḥadīth* narrated by Umm Salamah, recorded in Aḥmad, 1:201-203, 5:290-292; Ibn Hishām, *As-Sīrah an-Nabawīyyah*, 1:334-337. Al-Arnawūṭ says that its chain is strong.

[67]Part of the same *ḥadīth* just mentioned, narrated by 'Ā'ishah and recorded by Al-Bukhārī and others.

Then he asked, "Did you find him telling a lie before he said what he is saying?" He answered, "No, we never experienced him lying." The king then asked, "Are his followers the weak or the nobles?" He was told that the weak were following him. He then asked, "Are they increasing or decreasing in number?" He was told that they were increasing. He then asked, "Did anyone turn from his religion in anger with him after he had entered the religion?" They said no. The king said, "Have you fought him?" They said yes. The king asked about the fighting between them and they told him, "Sometimes they win and sometimes we win." The king asked, "Has he ever betrayed anyone?" They told him that he had not. He then asked, "What does he command?" They said, "He commands us to worship only Allah, not ascribing any partners to Him. And he forbids us what our fathers worshiped. He commands us to pray, speak the truth, practice temperance and be kind to relatives."

Those were more than ten questions. After asking them, the king told them what they demonstrated, "I asked you if any of his forefathers were king and you said no. If you had said that among his forefathers was a king, I would have said that he is a person who is seeking the kingdom of his father. And I asked you if anyone among you had made the same statements he makes. You answered no. I would have told you, if you had said that there was such a person making the same statements, that he is simply following in the footsteps of that person. Then I asked if you had ever known him to lie before he started his claims. You answered in the negative. I concluded that it was not possible for one who did not lie in matters of man to lie while speaking about Allah. I asked you if the weak or the nobles follow him and you told me that the weak follow him. These are the people who follow the messengers," meaning in the beginning of their message.

Then he said, "I asked you if his followers were increasing or decreasing, and you said they are certainly increasing. This is what happens with true faith until it becomes dominant. And I asked you if anyone had turned from his religion in anger with him after he had entered the religion. You said no. That is the case with true faith. When it enters the heart, no one can be displeased with it afterwards." This is one of the greatest signs of truth. On the other hand, deception and falsehood must be exposed in the end. Those who believed in such a false message end up denouncing it. Those who remained away from it at the beginning never enter its fold. Falsehood can prevail for a short time but then it becomes exposed.

Heraclius continued by saying, "I asked you about the fighting between you and him and you said that sometimes you are

victorious and sometimes he. That is the way with messengers. They are tested but the final result is always for them. And I asked you if he had ever betrayed anyone and you said no. That is the way of the messengers; they never betray." He was aware of the ways of the messengers and how Allah dealt with them. He knew that sometimes they are victorious and sometimes they are tested. He knew that they never betray. He knew those were the signs of the messengers and that it was the way of Allah to test the prophets and Believers with both ease and hardship so they could attain gratitude and patience. In the *Ṣaḥīḥ* it is recorded that the Prophet (peace be on him) said, "I swear by the One in Whose hand is my life, Allah never decrees anything for a Believer except that is good for him. And that is the case for no one else except the Believer. If comfort comes to him he gives thanks and that is good for him. If hardship comes to him he is patient and that is good for him."[68]

Allah has explained in the Qur'ān the wisdom behind the enemy's victory over the Believers at Uḥud. He says, "Lose not heart, nor fall into despair, for you must gain mastery if you are true in faith," [3:139], and "*Alif Lām Mīm*. Do men think that they will be left alone on saying, 'We believe,' and they will not be tested?" [29:1-2]. There are many verses and *aḥādīth* that tell how Allah acts towards His creatures and what wisdom underlies His acts which bedazzle the mind.

Heraclius continued, "I asked you about his teachings and you said that he asked you to worship Allah alone without associating anyone with Him, to offer prayer, abide by truth, practice temperance and do good to kin, and that he forbade you to worship the gods your fathers had been worshiping. This is what the prophets preach. I knew that a prophet was to be born; however, I did not expect that he would be from you. I wish I could accept him. Were I not king, I would go to see him. If what you say is true, he will conquer the ground on which I am standing." Heraclius was addressing Abū Sufyān Ibn Harb, who was at that time a disbeliever and a staunch enemy of the Prophet (peace be on him). Abū Sufyān himself stated, "When we left I told my companions, 'The matter of the son of Abū Kabshah (the Prophet) has become so strong that even the king of the Romans fears it.' Since that time I was certain that the Prophet's religion would dominate until Allah forced me into Islam, even though I disliked it."[69]

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[68]Muslim, *Az-Zuhd wa ar-Riqāq*, 2999; Aḥmad, 4:332, 6:16.

[69]Al-Bukhārī, 7, 51, 2681, 2804, 2941, 2978, 3174, 4553, 5980, 6260, 7196,

One must realize that things that happen within the heart are produced by a complexity of causes, none of which can be regarded as sufficient in itself. Satiety, quenching of thirst, gratitude, joy and sorrow, and other similar things are complex experiences which are caused by a combination of factors, though each may have its own effects. Similar is the case with knowledge that is based on reports. One report generates some probability in the heart, a second report strengthens it, and so on until it is transformed into definite knowledge. The same is true of the arguments for the veracity or otherwise of a claimant.

Furthermore, Allah has preserved some vestiges that point to the favors He bestowed on His prophets and Believers, as well as what punishment He meted out to those who denied the messengers. Examples are the relics of the flood of Noah or of the drowning of the Pharaoh and his army. Whenever Allah narrates the stories of the successive prophets in Sūrat Ash-Shu'arā, such as the stories of Moses, Abraham, Noah and others after him, He stated at the end of each story, "Truly in that is a sign, but most men do not believe. And truly, your Lord is He, the Exalted in Might, Most Merciful" [26:8-9, 68-69, 103-104, 121-122, 139-140, 158-159, 174-175 and 190-191].

In short, the knowledge that there have been people in the world who claimed that they were messengers of Allah, that a section of people followed them and others rejected them, that Allah helped the prophets and their followers and made them victorious, and that He punished their enemies – all of this is part of the most reliable and most certain part of historical knowledge. This knowledge has been transmitted in a far better and clearer manner than the knowledge concerning the kings of Persia or the scholars of Greece, such as Hippocrates, Galen, Ptolemy, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle.

Today, when we know about the prophets, as well as their followers and enemies, through continuous transmission of reports, we become certain, for various reasons, that they were true prophets. First, they had told their people that Allah would eventually help them and leave their opponents to perish. The final matter would be in their favor. Second, it actually happened that Allah gave them victory and destroyed their enemies. When we also know how such occurred, for example how Pharaoh was drowned, how the people of Noah perished in the deluge and how Allah saved him and his companions, we recognize the truthfulness of the messengers. Third, if one is familiar with what the messengers

7541; Muslim, *Al-Jihād*, 1773; Aḥmad, 1:262-263.

brought of laws and principles of life, it will be clear to him that they were the most knowledgeable men and that what they said could not have come from an ignorant liar. Furthermore, what they brought of mercy, well-being, guidance, goodness, guiding mankind to what benefits them and keeping them from what harms them is proof that these things came from truly sincere and affectionate well-wishers of mankind who wanted nothing but good and happiness for them.

This is not the place to mention the miracles of Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him). One may consult the relevant books on the subject, such as the work of Al-Bayhaqī and others.

To deny the prophethood of Muḥammad (peace be on him) is to challenge the wisdom of Allah and to accuse Him of being unjust and unwise. In fact, it is to deny His Lordship (*rubūbīyyah*). Allah is well exalted above such things.

Here is the explanation of that argument. Suppose Muḥammad were not a prophet, as they say, but simply an unjust ruler who claimed to have been sent by Allah, enjoined some things and forbade others, prescribed new rules and laws and abrogated earlier ones, fought people and killed followers of former prophets, even though they were not wrong, reduced their women to slaves, seized their property, annexed their lands, and went on doing all of this until he dominated the land. And during all of that, he claimed that he was acting on the command of Allah and that Allah was blessing him and was pleased with him. And suppose further that he continued such lies for twenty-three years until Allah gave him victory, helped him by supernatural means, responded to his prayers, destroyed his enemies and gave him fame. If he did all of these things out of evil, as they claim, then he must have been the most wicked of men and the greatest liar ever. He would have also been the destroyer of the prophetic religions and killer of the pious friends of Allah. Despite all that, Allah kept helping him and bestowing on him one success after another. And Allah never thought for a moment to stop or destroy him. If (any people) believe that, they must also believe that there is no Creator, Ruler or Lord of the world, for if there were a Ruler of the world, powerful and wise, He would have certainly stopped him, punished him severely and made him a lesson for people who came afterwards. Nothing short of this would be becoming to any human ruler, not to speak of the Ruler of rulers and Judge of judges.

But, on the contrary, Allah increased his fame, made his religion prevail and made a great many people in all parts of the world believe in his prophecy and witness to his piety. We do not deny that many people have falsely claimed prophecy and enjoyed some success for a time. But their successes were short-lived and their

victories ephemeral. In fact, Allah made His true prophets and their followers triumphant in the end over such liars. He annihilated the latter completely. This is the way of Allah that He has been following forever. Even the disbelievers are aware of this fact. Allah says in the Qur'ān, "Do they say: 'A poet! We wait for him some calamity (hatched) by time.' Say: You wait. I, too, will wait along with you" [52:30-31].

Don't you see that He is stating that His perfection, wisdom and power refuse to allow anyone who forges statements in His name to remain unpunished? Indeed, He will certainly make such a person a lesson for His servants, as His practice with the forgers in the past has shown. He says, "What! Do they say: 'He has forged a falsehood against Allah?' But if Allah willed, He could seal your heart" [42:24]. This ends the reply to the condition and then Allah makes a clear, unconditional statement that He wipes away what is false and establishes what is true. He says, "No just estimate of Allah do they make when they say: 'Allah does not send anything to man (by way of revelation)" [6:91]. Allah has stated that anyone who denies His sending of messengers and revelation does not have the correct image of Allah.

People have distinguished between a prophet (*nabī*) and a messenger (*rasūl*) in different ways. The best view on this question, in my judgment, is that when Allah reveals about the Unseen to a man and asks him to convey that to others, he is a prophet and a messenger. But if He does not ask him to preach it to others, he is a prophet and not a messenger. Hence, a messenger is a special kind of prophet. It follows that every messenger is a prophet but not vice-versa. The office of messenger is higher than the office of prophet which it incorporates. On the other hand, the category of the messengers is a smaller category (in number) than that of the prophets, which includes the former and is wider than it. In short, as a concept, the office of messenger is wider, but as regards the number of its bearers, it is smaller.

The sending of messengers is one of the greatest blessings that Allah has bestowed on mankind. This is especially true in the case of Muḥammad (peace be on him). Allah has said, "Allah did confer a great favor on the Believers when He sent among them a messenger from among themselves, rehearsing unto them the verses of Allah, purifying them, and instructing them in scripture and wisdom. while before that they had been in manifest error" [3:164]; also, "We sent you not but as a mercy for all creatures" [21:107].